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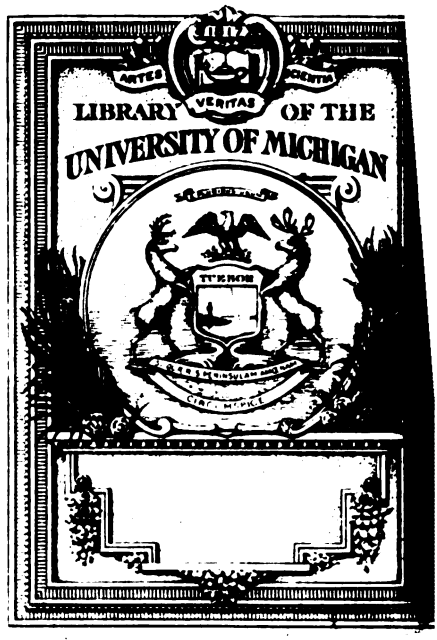
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A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE







GEOFFREY CHAUCER

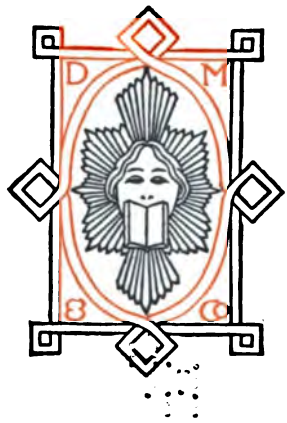
A HISTORY
OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL
AND
THOMAS SECCOMBE

CAXTON TO WALTON
(1482) (1593)

VOLUME I



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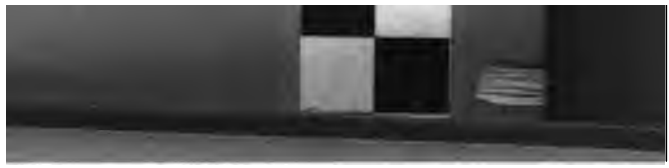
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INTRODUCTION

"This volume would have been at least twice as large, if I had not made bold to strike out innumerable passages."—Publisher's Preface to *The Travels of Mr. Lemuel Gulliver.*

HISTORIES of English Literature with an apparatus of portraits and biographies would appear to supply a need which distinguishes a comparatively late phase in English letters. The eighteenth century had advanced some years before such a sentiment as curiosity in regard to the private lives of great authors can be said to have existed. The gradual awakening of some such interest brought in its train a series of classified biographies of poets, dramatists, and novelists. Eventually we arrived at the compilation of elaborate *Fasti* as represented by the manual of the late Prof. Henry Morley, and from this stage there was rapid progress to what the specialist calls "mere history." We are all historians now, and literature lends itself with exceptional ease to historical treatment. History, however, is an extremely ambiguous term. It is used indifferently to signify chronological annals, animated pictures, portraits of great men, the confused warrings of dynasties and races, and the still more perplexing conflicts of theories, political, ethical, economic, and social. Nor is the difficulty inherent in the word in any degree diminished by its application to literature. Analogy, however, suggests one extremely convenient demarcation of the subject. It prompts us to isolate the subject of origins as bearing the same relation to literature as anthropology bears to history; thus enabling us to start fair with a stablished nationality and a full-grown vernacular. The histories of



our vernacular European literatures are all comparatively brief—five or six centuries at most—and that of England is no exception. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay." That at any rate is the European point of view. Starting with a language and vocabulary in some respects rudimentary, and one or two simpler forms, the historical development proceeds with little break from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous.

The term "literature" itself is by no means easy to define. In the widest sense, every thought that is converted into script becomes literature from the moment of the conversion. Attempts have been made from time immemorial to circumscribe the plot of literature which is called fine or humane and corresponds to Fine Art (*Belles Lettres, Beaux Arts*) in such well-sounding but vague generalities as "the lasting expression in words of the meaning of life." The "best words in the best order" is another ingenious phrase which has been restricted generally to the definition of good poetry, but is equally applicable to good prose. There is *one* inevitable order. But all such definitions evade the question of significance; everything depends on the magnitude of the thought expressed and its relation to the more permanent elements of human wit and wisdom. We cannot satisfactorily define literature any more than we can agree upon a point of view from which critics are to approach and comment upon it. Are they to treat the history of literature as a process and its work as a product to be classified and standardised, or are they simply to gaze at its masterpieces and describe their sensations? These are a few of the problems. Other problems are suggested by the word "English." What do we mean by English?

A school we might almost call the nationalist school of English historians, headed by Freeman and Green, made the singular discovery that English history really began in



Holstein. A like ambition has tried to discover the wellhead of English literature in Jutland. That the preponderant element in our speech is not Latin or Norman-French but Low German is perfectly true, but the nomenclature which prefers Old English to the unsatisfactory but much more distinctive Anglo-Saxon as applied to this fossil English is worse than misleading. If we are to go into the misty period before the single speech emerges that men of to-day call English—groping among patois from which Chaucer would have recoiled and which Wyclif and Langland would hardly have understood—there seems no adequate reason why we should not include the Latin Norman-French, and primitive Celtic literature of early Britain. All these languages were spoken and written by our forefathers in this country; Latin in church and cloister, by diplomatists and historians; French at court and camp, by lawyers and merchants; Welsh and Cornish west of Malvern and Mendip. Here, in fact, are two great subjects—the watershed or dividing line between which is formed by the century which unites the commencement of *The Canterbury Tales* in 1391 with the completion of Caxton's life-work just one hundred years later. The first subject, which is not ours, is the early literature of Britain—a literature not of one language nor of one race, and mainly of philological, historical, and antiquarian interest. The second great subject, and the greater, is English literature. From Caxton's death in 1491 England is no longer polyglot. The several streamlets have united to form one river, the current of which we must endeavour to follow in its ever-deepening course wherever English is cherished as the mother-tongue.

William Caxton began his work as a popular printer in this country, roughly speaking, in 1475, and he found books written in English to suit his purpose, going back just about a hundred years. He felt that it was necessary,



from every point of view, to confine himself to the King's English as it was understood in the days of Edward IV. And with the aid of his press he commenced that work of fixing the English that is written and printed, whereby was consummated in three or four generations a process which otherwise might have continued for several centuries. We follow Caxton in regarding Chaucer as the day-star of English poetry, as Wyclif may perhaps be regarded in a sense as the day-star of English prose; and our First Book is devoted to a discovery of the King's English as Caxton and our early English printers understood it. Quitting the era of transition, our Second Book deals with the great flowering time of English drama. We have a new England equipped with a new vision and intoxicated with a new language which overflows in an almost inexhaustible fulness of lyric poetry. It is the age of Spenser, of Marlowe, of Shakespeare, of Fletcher, of Jonson and Donne. In our Third Book we have to navigate the straits of Puritanism. It is something that religion was persuaded to countenance an epic poem—the one great epic in our language. In sharp contrast to the age of Milton and Bunyan is the region where Dryden and Pope, Addison and Swift, rose supreme over the taste of nearly a century and a half. It is an age of critical commentary and pungent epigram, of prose essay and verse satire. It is an age when the class of readers was immensely enlarged. Men began to collect in coffee-houses and divert themselves with social essays and moral satires. This era of red brick ushers in an age of Whig optimism, national expansion, and masculine common-sense. Our Fifth Book is sober with the multitude of moral tales and essays, enlivened with much descriptive letter-writing, informed by copious memoirs, historical and biographical. It is a well-to-do age that includes Johnson and Chesterfield, Richardson and Fielding, Gray and Walpole, Burke



and Gibbon, Goldsmith and Sheridan, Cowper and Burns. Then comes the era of Romance dealt with in our Sixth Book. It is the great transforming epoch of Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. The wonder-worship that was to do combat with the critical forces of the age is mirrored in the typical apostrophe of Keats to the Voice of Romance,

> The same that oft-times hath
> Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Our Seventh and last Book is devoted to the literature of the era 1837—1900, which will probably be known as the Victorian. Although in inspiration, in intensity, and in sunny humour the Victorian age may have been surpassed, in fundamental brain power and in intellectual variety it is probably without a rival in our literary annals. It is the age of Carlyle, Newman, Mill, Emerson, Froude, Ruskin, and Spencer; of Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, and Swinburne; of Macaulay; of Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, George Meredith, and Thomas Hardy. To this age we give the title "The Ascendency of the Novel."

The present attempt at an historical survey of our literature from the invention of printing down to the present day makes no pretence of being exhaustive. It has been reported from an honest study of the materials, but we cannot hope to have escaped errors. We have written, not for specialists or scholars, but for the general public. We have hoped to interest and amuse, and in some measure to instruct ordinary readers. We provide no large-scale map, but a handy atlas to direct the student to an independent exploration of certain definite regions. Some attempt has been made at classification, scientific, æsthetic,



and moral, and we have tried to refer individual works to their respective types. More importance, however, is attached to the biographical element, which sets forth the environment and personality of authors.

In attempting to supply an index to the best things that have been said and the best things that have been written about English literature we have not disdained the plan of Baedeker in using a star (*). This, it is hoped, will be useful in helping those who are bewildered by the number of items in systematic bibliographies. But while trying to convey the verdicts of different ages and successive schools of critics, we have not by any means refrained from personal estimates. In short, a sincere attempt has been made to convey within moderate limits and with as much fulness and accuracy as was possible an introduction to English literature easy to read and understand, and at the same time not wholly devoid of value as a book of reference. The illustrations have been selected from the best available portraits.

The main part of this history has been done by Mr. Thomas Seccombe. The authors are both much indebted to Mr. J. H. Lobban, who has carefully revised the whole work. There are many other minor obligations, which it will be our pleasant duty to acknowledge in their proper places in the bibliographical notes appended to the various chapters.

T. S.
W. R. N.



A HISTORY
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE





BOOK I

THE KING'S ENGLISH

CHAPTER I

CAXTON

"Good reason has England to be proud of this son of hers who opens a new era in her literature."—JUSSERAND.

From xylography to typography—Gutenberg—Pre-Caxton English—William Caxton—His life and achievement—*The Dictes and Sayinges of the Philosophers*—Caxton's influence on the language—Early printing and manuscripts.

THE invention of typography was not the result of a happy thought or of a flash of invention; it was rather the result of a long series of modifications and mechanical improvements, more especially in connection with the manufacture of tools, which took place between 1400 and 1440. This last may be taken as the critical date, which witnessed the transformation from *Xylography* to *Typography;* while the perfection of the art, as far as all its principles are concerned, is associated indissolubly with the printing of the Bible of forty-two lines, known as the *Mazarine Bible,* or First Bible of John Gutenberg, inaugurated at Mainz in the autumn of 1450. We do not know precisely when this impression of the Vulgate was completed, though we shall probably not be wrong in making it coincide with that of the greatest historical event of the age—the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. We know for certain that the Indulgence of Nicholas V. was printed at Mainz in November, 1454;



and this is the first known specimen of typograhy which bears the date printed upon it.

The progress of investigation has, in the main, led to the assertion being made with less and less hesitation, that Gutenberg first of all cast printing-types in moulds and matrices—the one critical step in advance which converted printing into a great art. And his type-mould was not merely the first; it has remained, essentially, the only practical mechanism for making types. Assuming, as we have been content to do, that Gutenberg was the prime inventor of printing,[1] it is plain that there were many contemporary rivals in the art, who were already, as it were, on tiptoe at the threshold of the invention. Conspicuous among such rivals were Fust and Schoeffer, the printers of the admirable *Mainz* or *Mentz Psalter* of 1457. It is tolerably plain that Schoeffer had learnt the mystery of printing at the fountain-head—in the workshop of Gutenberg. Two rival printing-offices having once been established in Mainz, it was not likely that the process could long be kept secret. It was communicated to Stras-

[1] The merit of Gutenberg's invention was largely due to his superior method of making types by means of punch, matrix, and mould. When he began his experiments, he found already in common use paper, printing-ink, engraving in relief, some form of printing-press, and the art of printing playing-cards and block-books. It is possible even that isolated types were in use before his day (if anywhere, presumably at Haarlem and Avignon); but they could not be used to profit, because they were not scientifically made and sufficiently exact. That Gutenberg derived advantage from the successful experiments of the block-book printers of the preceding epoch is probable, but he must have added to the common stock of knowledge much more than he found. His type-founding methods were the only key to the invention of practical typography. He himself speaks of the new art as dependent upon the admirable proportion, harmony, and connection of the punches and matrices. (See De Vinne, *Invention of Printing*, 2d ed., 1877.)



CAXTON'S PRESS IN THE ALMONRY, WESTMINSTER



burg by Mentelin and Eggestein in 1458, by Pfister to Bamberg in 1461, by Ulric Zell to Cologne in 1462, by Keffer to Nuremberg in 1469, and by Zainer to Augsburg about the same time.

The introduction of printing opened a new sphere of literary activity everywhere, but especially in England, for there it preceded, by just enough time to enable it to disseminate, the Renaissance and Reformation movements. It coincided with the formation of modern English, and followed by less than a hundred years the masterpieces of the transitional English tongue, which were still green in the popular memory, and which in its zeal for popularity it hastened to incorporate among its productions.

The English of the two centuries before Caxton's time was transitional between the Gothic dialect of Anglo-Saxon (akin to the Low Dutch and Frisian, still spoken on the shores of the Baltic and in North Holland), and modern English. The old English or Anglo-Saxon of Alfred's day, which had been spoken in England roughly from A. D. 800 to 1200, had become wholly unintelligible to the English speaking the various dialects of Edward III.'s day. Under the early Plantagenets, English had sunk almost entirely to rustic and provincial use. Latin was used by the learned and by the clergy; French was the language of the schools, the law courts, the merchants, and the court. No English king, indeed, spoke English habitually before Henry IV. The town class and gentry of the thirteenth century were probably bilingual: they spoke French and English. It seemed doubtful which would predominate. During the century before Chaucer, however, English was rapidly gaining ground. The mixture of peoples had rubbed off the inflections of the old language. Anglo-Saxon was deficient in elegant, martial, and abstract terms. French supplied these, and Latin, through French, enriched the native dialects still more.



The current English of London and the Eastern Midlands completely dropped the germanic syntax—the practice of putting the verb at the end of the sentence. It modified the old pronunciation and abandoned the old complexity of genders and cases.

The bed-rock or stony skeleton of the language was still Teutonic, but it was filled up and enriched by a soil of French words, phrases, and usages. By Chaucer's time the mixture was far forward, and we have arrived at a language with a mixed vocabulary and a straightforward accidence that we can almost call "English," in a modern sense.

We can thus say that by a happy chance the Age of Caxton coincides for all practical purposes with the era of Modern England: for did it not witness, approximately at any rate, the fixation of the English speech as we now have it; the presentation in print of such speechmasters of aforetime [1] as were still intelligible to the multitude; the sunset of the old religion and the old romance; the dawn of the new learning and of the knowledge of the new world; and the rise of our own little despotic and insular Tudor dynasty? Numerous tomes have been written about the Tower of Babel, and even of the time before the Flood, in the annals of "English Literature" (so called). We have chosen deliberately to pass by Hengist and Horsa and the Heptarchy and to begin with the era when—even although three kinds of vernacular speech, wholly unconnected with English, remained unsubdued in our island—the blended English language of Shakespeare and the Bible had triumphed definitely alike over Anglo-Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Danish, and Anglo-Norman.

[1] Of these we estimate that four and four only can be said directly to modulate the literary life and thought of a later age—namely, Wyclif, Langland, Chaucer, and Gower; these four we have treated retrospectively.



Apart from his services as standardiser of English, and primary selector of standard authors, Caxton's diligence alone was perfectly extraordinary; for he not only closely supervised all the work of his press, but also translated a number of books and treatises from the French in accordance with what he thought might be a popular demand. Caxton's position thus gives him a place of first-rate importance in our literature, and one that fully demands that a full-length portrait of him should be presented to the reader.

William Caxton was born, probably near Hadlow in the Weald of Kent, about 1422. The large Flemish admixture which had been in Kent since Edward III.'s introduction of foreign weavers into that county made the dialect a rude one. The sound of *a* was pronounced very broadly, and the words "ask" and "axe" are said to have been interchangeable. Caxton's name was probably pronounced Carston or Cawston. Since before the days of Sir Richard Whittington it had been the ambition of country parents in the southeastern counties to place their sons with the City merchants. William Caxton was apprenticed in 1438 to Robert Large, a London mercer in Old Jewry. Large, at his death in 1441, left his industrious apprentice 20 marks, wherewith the young man set up in Bruges, then the capital of Burgundy, one of the greatest marts in Europe, and a famous centre of commercial education. By about 1462 Caxton had risen to be governor of the Domus Angliæ, or House of the English Guild of Merchant Adventurers, in the city. At the close of the same year he entered the service of the King's sister, Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. He had already begun in 1469 to render into "the Fayre language of the Frenshe" the popular mediæval romance compiled by Raoul Le Fèvre, entitled *Le Recueil des Histoires de Troye*, and in the comparative leisure which he enjoyed in the



service of the Duchess he completed it in September, 1471. The demand for the book was considerable, and it had to be copied again and again.

Nowhere in Europe could this work be done more efficiently than in Flanders. The wealth and cultivation of the Burgundian courtiers had stimulated a passion for beautiful books. Prizes were offered (as the reader of *The Cloister and the Hearth* will remember) to excite emulation among caligraphers; and corporations existed, comprising the scriveners, bookbinders, engravers, illuminators, and other craftsmen, such as the Frères de la Plume at Brussels, and at Bruges the Guild of St. John —the patron saint of scribes—who did the work of manuscript reproduction, by means of a carefully devised division of labour, in an amazingly rapid, and at the same time accurate and systematic, manner.

There could unquestionably have been no difficulty in getting the book manifolded at Bruges by the ordinary mediæval methods; but it was just at this moment that news of the novel German mystery of printing had reached Flanders from Cologne. In 1471 we may take it for certain that the talk about this new method of book-making was in everybody's mouth at Bruges. Caxton was not long in resolving to put himself to the pains of learning the newly discovered art; and the immediate incentive, as he himself tells us, was the prospect of a greater ease in multiplying his *Troy Book*. There was at Bruges, during the time of Caxton's sojourn there, an eminent caligrapher and stationer, named Colard Mansion, and probability seems to favour the theory that Caxton and Mansion learnt the elements of printing together at Cologne about 1472. Returning to Bruges in the following year, it is suggested that they set up a printing-press together there. They appear to have obtained a set of French types, and it was from them that Caxton printed, or paid Mansion to print,



The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy (in folio, presumably in 1474). There also the second English book was printed, *The Game and Play of the Chess* (folio, 1475), translated through the French from a Latin treatise called *Ludus Scacchorum*. As continued to be the case after his migration to England, he printed usually upon paper made in the Low Countries, and rarely used vellum.

In 1476 Caxton left Bruges to practise his newly acquired art in his native country, and on November 18th, 1477, he printed at the Almonry, Westminster,[1] a book called *The Dictes and Sayinges of the Philosophers. The Dictes* is undoubtedly the first book printed in England.[2] Its type, though dissimilar from that of the two former books in which Caxton had been concerned, is identical with that used in Mansion's later books. It is therefore probable that Caxton brought to Westminster his printing-apparatus from Bruges. The translation (from the French *Les Dits Moreaux des Philosophes*) was from the pen of Earl Rivers, but was revised at the Earl's request by Caxton, who added a prologue and a chapter "touchyng Wymmen." *The History of Jason,* an English translation of Raoul Le Fèvre's *Les Fais . . . du . . . Chevalier Jason,* which seems to have been first printed by Mansion

[1] In the parish of St. Margaret's, very near where the Westminster Palace Hotel now stands.

[2] *The Game of Chess* was formerly thought to be the first book printed in England. The reader will remember Jonathan Oldbuck's story of "Snuffy Davy," "with the scent of a sleuth-hound and the snap of a bull-dog" for a rare volume on a bookstall. "Snuffy Davy bought *The Game of Chess*, 1474, the first book ever printed in England, from a stall in Holland for about 2 groschen, or twopence of our money." He sold it to Osborne for £20. Osborne sold it to Askew for £60, and Askew for £170 to the King. Scott says that the story is true, but Blades (alas!) tears it to fragments with the insatiate fury of the hardened iconoclast.



about 1478, was another early publication of Caxton's Westminster press. But the claim of precedence over *The Dictes,* as the first book printed in England, which had been put forward in its behalf, rests on shadowy evidence.

From 1477 to 1491 Caxton was busily employed in printing and translating. In the case of these translations, almost always through the medium of the French, Caxton frequently speaks of himself as translator, where it is highly probable, particularly in the case of a book so voluminous as *The Golden Legend,* that he employed one or more understudies or assistants. There is no doubt, however, that he wrote the Prologues and Epilogues to the versions that he issued, and many of these are racy and individual enough, with a curious twist of Scottish humour, in which caution, apology, and rebuke are most quaintly intermingled. His "original Writings," including, together with these Prologues, the "last book" which he appended to Higden's *Policronicon,* are printed in William Blades's monumental *Life and Typography of William Caxton* (1861). *Jason* was soon followed by *The Canterbury Tales,* a large folio of 374 leaves. In 1480 John Lettou, a Lithuanian, started printing in London with a smaller and neater type than Caxton had used. His work stimulated Caxton to fresh efforts. In 1482 he was joined by William of Malines, though after 1484 Malines or "Machlinia" seems to have had a press of his own in Holborn; and after 1490 Machlinia's business was continued by Richard Pynson, a very excellent printer of Norman birth, who may have served for a short time under Caxton. Editions of Chaucer, Lydgate, Mandeville, Reynard the Fox, Sarum Missals, Hours, Etiquette and Cookery Books soon begin to show that competition was active and the quest for popular work keen. Caxton hereupon introduced several improvements into his work, such as a smaller type, woodcuts, printed signatures, and



improved spacing. Among his later productions were *The Golden Legend* or *Lives of Saints, The Fables of Æsop, Le Morte d'Arthur,* a portion of Virgil's *Æneid,* and a version of a Latin *Ars Moriendi.* Caxton himself edited all the books he printed, and he himself translated or personally supervised the translating of no less than twenty-two, including the *Troy Book* and *The Golden Legend.* He produced in all between eighty and ninety different books known to be genuine, employing apparently six slightly variant types. Of these over fifty different specimens are contained in the British Museum, a grand total which is surpassed only by Lord Spencer's collection of sixty Caxtons, formerly at Althorp, now forming part of the Rylands Library at Manchester.

It is in the preface to the *Eneydos* that we get one of the last peeps at the venerable master-printer, in a wood-picture drawn by his own hand, where he describes himself "setting in his studye, where laye many and dyverse pamflettes and bookys," as he worked at the translation or corrected the proof-sheets of the *Eneydos,* the style of which evidently delighted him, as we find him in continuation stating that the "fayre and ornate termes" gave him "grete plasyr." He had then removed from his old establishment in the Almonry, at the sign of the Red Pale, but was still close to the Abbey; and we may imagine him listening to the heavy strokes of the clock hour after hour, as he sat diligently at his work, while quietly rejoicing in the busy sounds of the neighbouring press-room, where Wynkyn de Worde and his apprentices were deeply employed to his certain profit.[1] Caxton died at the close

[1] See the *History of the Art of Printing* by H. Noel Humphreys, who, however, does not agree with Blades as to Mansion's influence over Caxton, attributing the honour of being Caxton's tutor to Ulric Zell, of Cologne. (Cf. Gordon Duff, *Early Printed Books,* 1893; H. R. Plomer, *English Printing,* 1900.)



of 1491, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Margaret's, Westminster. On his death his materials passed into the hands of Wynkyn de Worde, his assistant, who continued to print from Caxton's fount in the same house at Westminster. In 1500, however, Wynkyn de Worde moved to the Sun, in Fleet Street, and died in 1534, having produced in all about 600 books.

Caxton was denounced by Gibbon for his omission of classical works from his list of publications. But, in the first place, Caxton was necessarily swayed by commercial considerations; while, in the second place, he had the instinctive desire of a printer to appeal to a popular rather than an academic circle. As a voluminous translator he did much to fix the literary language of England. He evidently knew French very thoroughly, though he was never very literal. He interpolated some passages and paraphrased others. As a typographer his work was homely: he seems to have had no idea of vieing with the artistic and luxurious workmanship of Mainz or Venice.[1] Homeliness, too, is the characteristic of the useful English prose which he employed in his numerous translations. He introduced a good many French and some Dutch words. Yet the general effect of his press-work was to arrest the decay of old Teutonic words, and to give stability to our spelling. It is largely owing to the fact that Caxton learnt printing abroad and first employed a font of French type that the old English **þ** disappeared. Foreigners had no matrix for such a piece of type; consequently *th* usually replaces it, though the letter *y* is

[1] In the first place, the MSS. that served as his models were inferior. No English type-founder of any note arose before John Day, who began printing about 1550, and the first type-founder who could really compete with the great foreign houses of France and Flanders was William Caslon (1692—1766).



sometimes used for this purpose; hence the old form of "y^e" for "the."

The guiding principle among the early printers was to make their printed books look as much like the best class of manuscript work, to which students were accustomed, as possible. They commenced their printed texts in just the same way as the manuscript writers had done. No title-page or imprint setting forth the writer's name, the date and place of execution of the work, and other details was provided; but the first page was headed merely with "Hic Incipit" and the name of the treatise. Wynkyn de Worde was the first English printer systematically to adopt the use of title-pages after the death of Caxton in 1491.

Similarly, in the body of their work, by the adoption of a fount of type which resembled, as nearly as possible, the secretary hand of the period, it seems to have been the idea of the early printers to deprecate contrast and invite comparison with the best work of their predecessors, the scrivenirs.[1] In this they have often been so successful that early printed pages have been mistaken for and even

[1] By some of its practitioners the new art was modestly described as "Ars artificialiter scribendi." The modern or Roman style of type (flourishing at Venice under Jenson as early as 1470) was not commonly introduced into England until late in Henry VIII.'s reign. Even then the black-letter held its own in Bibles, proclamations, Acts of Parliament, ballads, and reprints of Old English authors such as Chaucer. When a prisoner was allowed benefit of clergy, a psalter was handed to him in the Gothic character, and he was asked to read a verse, called the "neck verse." He mumbled something, and the clerk said the regular formula, "Legit ut clericus." It is now used only for ornamental purposes. The old practice of using *u* and *v* interchangeably, *v* at the beginning and *u* in the middle of a word, persisted until the seventeenth century, and the old form of *s* in the body of a word (*ſ*) until late in the eighteenth century.



sold under the description of manuscripts. The enemies of the printers were not backward in denouncing them as cheats, and their productions as *contrefaçons,* or spurious imitations.

It was only quite gradually that the introduction of title-pages, of wood-blocks for capitals, of printed signatures, of a printed as opposed to a script character, and of regular spacing gave to printed books the distinctive character which they have now maintained for four centuries, and to the printer the unchallenged control of the lines of communication between the retina and the brain of man.



CHAPTER II

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

"Of Chaucer, truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him."

—SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

"In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense."—DRYDEN.

Outline of Chaucer's life—His personal appearance and portraits—Three chronological periods of his work—*Troilus and Criseyde*—*The Legend of Good Women*—Chaucer's debt to French and Italian sources—*The Canterbury Tales*—The scheme of the poem—The qualities of Chaucer's poetry—History of the Chaucerian MSS. and text—Attempts to modernise the text.

OF the few masters of the old literature whose work Caxton sought to perpetuate by means of his new art, by far the most pre-eminent was Chaucer. From his fellow-craftsmen, Gower, Occleve, and Lydgate, Chaucer had received the fullest meed of praise. The French poet Eustace Deschamps had likened him in his lifetime to Socrates, Seneca, and Ovid. The brilliant group of Scots poets, Henryson, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay, had not very much in common one with the other, but they shared the same fervent admiration for Chaucer. Their poetic ancestor, James I., spoke of him in just the same way, as "his master." Caxton himself yielded to no man in his enthusiasm. "He excelleth in mine opinion," he wrote, "all other writers in our English; for he writeth



no void words, but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence."

Of the poets who preceded Chaucer, there is only one whose poetry can claim to be in any degree readable at the present day, or to be even intelligible to those whose mother-tongue is English as it is now understood. This poet, of course, is Langland.[1] But there is really no comparing his *Piers Plowman* with *The Canterbury Tales.* One could as soon compare a sermon with a song. Chaucer is, in fact, to Langland as the sun is to the moon, and to the great corpus of dialect, Old English or Anglo-Saxon, poetry of the remoter past, as the moon is to the Milky Way.

Geoffrey Chaucer, son of John Chaucer, a vintner,[2] was born in Thames Street, London, possibly about 1336—though there are authorities who go so far as to say probably about 1340. In 1356 he was a page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III., being specially attached to the service of the Duchess. In 1359 he accompanied Edward III. and his army upon that English King's last invasion of France, and was captured by the French near Rheims; but he was ransomed early in 1360, the King contributing £16 to the purpose. In 1367 he was one of the Yeomen of the King's Chamber, described as Edward's "Dilectus Valettus," and in receipt of a salary of 20 marks. By this time the poet was married, for in 1366 the name Philippa Chaucer appears as that of one of the Ladies of the Queen's Bedchamber. Like the Queen, she was probably a native of Hainault. In 1374 a pension of £10 was granted to Geoffrey and Philippa for good service. Chaucer was sent abroad several times upon diplomatic errands

[1] See Chap. III. of our Second Book.

[2] The family had been vintners and cordwainers (*calcearii*) for several descents, and were probably of French origin.



in the King's service. In 1372-3 he went on a mission to Genoa and Florence for the purpose of making an agreement with the former city as to a Genoese trading factory in England. On St. George's Day, 1374, he received from the King a grant of a pitcher of wine daily: this grant was afterwards commuted for a pension of 20 marks. In June of the same year he was made Comptroller of the Great Customs (wool, skins, and leather) at the Port of London. In the early summer of 1378 the Italian studies, which he had already commenced, were stimulated by another visit to Italy—on this occasion to treat with Bernabo Visconti, Lord of Milan, and Sir John Hawkwood, the famous condittiere, "touching the expediting of the King's war." During his absence he named the poet Gower as his legal representative. In 1382 he was made Comptroller of the Petty Customs, and four years later he was elected to Parliament as a Knight of the Shire for Kent. At this juncture, however, came a turning-point in his fortunes: he lost his two places in the customs, and had to realise his pensions for ready money. His dismissal was probably due to the fall of his patron, John of Gaunt, on the death of whose wife in 1369 he had written his *Book of the Duchess*. About the same time he seems to have lost his own wife and her pension. In 1389 things improved again on John of Gaunt's return to power. Chaucer was made Clerk of the King's Works at the Palace of Westminster, St. George's Chapel at Windsor, various royal manors and lodges, and the mews at Charing Cross; but he lost these appointments in 1391. It was probably during these years of increased leisure and financial vicissitude that *The Canterbury Tales* were taken in hand. In 1394 Richard II. granted him a new pension of £20 a year, but we find him frequently anticipating it by small loans from the Exchequer. His fortunes revived under Henry IV., who may have recog-



nised that Chaucer had some claim upon him as an old follower of the house of Lancaster: at any rate, a few days after his accession in 1399, by way of practical response to the veteran poet's *Complaint to his Purse,* he granted him an additional pension of 40 marks. In December, 1399, Chaucer leased a tenement in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel, Westminster, for the space of fifty years. He died there on October 25th, 1400, and was buried in St. Benet's Chapel in Westminster Abbey, where a monument, erected to his memory in Shakespeare's time, became the nucleus of the now famous Poets' Corner. A memorial window was unveiled in St. Saviour's, Southwark, on October 25th, 1900.

As in the case of Shakespeare, many fictitious legends and traditions became entwined with the life of the fourteenth-century poet. Many of these were due to a fallacious autobiographic interpretation of certain passages in his poems. Some were due to the inventive genius of Leland and other biographical compilers of the sixteenth century. Great labour has been expended by recent investigators in getting rid of these fables, and basing the life upon the dry but unyielding foundation of authentic records.

Chaucer's personal appearance is well known from a portrait of him by Occleve, which, in a greater degree than most portraits, confirms the ideas regarding him which one might gather from reading his works. This limning, or, as we should now call it, water-colour drawing, was introduced by Occleve into his book *De Regimine Principum* (now in the British Museum as Harleian MS. No. 4866). It is admittedly a memory-painting, yet it is the only one which is generally accepted as trustworthy. The figure, which is half-length, has a background of green tapestry. The poet wears a dark-coloured dress and hood; his right hand is extended, and in his left he holds a

string of beads. From his vest a black case is suspended, which appears to contain a knife, or possibly a "penner" or pen-case. The expression of the countenance is intelligent; but the fire of the eye seems quenched, and evident marks of advanced age appear on the countenance. A deduction from the apparent age must be made to accord with the poet's statement that he was old and unlusty at fifty-two. There are two other miniature portraits in manuscripts at the British Museum, upon one of which (Additional MS. 5141) there is little doubt that the quaint standing panel-portrait in the National Portrait Gallery is based. Some of these oil portraits [1] are of considerable interest, though it is not likely that any of them date back beyond the time of Elizabeth.

In the Occleve portrait we recognise the meditative, downcast, yet slyly observant eyes, the broad brow, the sensuous mouth, the somewhat large yet well-shaped nose, and the general expression of good humour—all features which seem characteristic of the describer of the Canterbury pilgrims. The poet has a small forked beard, such as that ascribed to the Merchant in *The Canterbury Tales;* the hair is white, and the general appearance that of a man of about sixty. In manner, if we may accept the autobiographical indications of his greatest poem, the poet seemed "elvish, doing to no wight dalliaunce," with the habit of staring on the ground, as if he would find a hair —a practice common with short-sighted people. There are, indeed, frequent hints of the poet's retiring habits, especially in *The Prologue* to *the Rime of Sir Thopas,* where Chaucer has put into the mouth of the host a half-bantering description of his personal appearance. We learn from

[1] For reproduction of all the best miniatures and portraits, with notes thereon, the curious reader is referred to M. H. Spielmann's interesting little monograph, *The Portraits of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1900).



other passages in his writings that he worked hard all day at the customs-books, and then, instead of recreation, he came home and applied himself to another book. "Dumb as a stone, studying and reading alway, till his head ached and his look became dazed, so that his neighbours, living at his very door, looked on him as an hermit," though he tells us that he was "really no ascetic" —"his abstinence was little."

By the more recent critics of Chaucer his work has been divided into three chronological periods—the French period, the Italian period, and the English period. From the writings of his fellow-countrymen, his predecessors in the use of the mother tongue from Cædmon to Langland, Chaucer derived little or nothing. He disregarded the old English tradition, the exponents of which he probably looked down upon as provincial and churlish. He began his literary career as a translator of French poems and adapter of French forms and ideas. To this period are assigned his translation of the *Roman de la Rose, Chaucer's A. B. C.* (an imitation, each of the twenty-three stanzas of which begins with a fresh letter of the alphabet), *The Complaint to Pity,* and *The Book of the Duchess.*

To the second period of Italian influence, which began about 1372, the date of the first Italian journey, are ascribed the chief of Chaucer's minor poems: *The Parliament of Foules* (birds) (1381), *Troilus and Criseyde* (1381-2), *The House of Fame* (1382), and *The Legend of Good Women* (1385).

All the poems of Chaucer's first period are, comparatively speaking, those of a prentice hand or student in the art of poetry. A great advance is shown in both technical power and originality in the long narrative poem of *Troilus and Criseyde,* not more than one-third of which was derived from its ostensible original, the *Il Filostrato* of Boccaccio; but Chaucer owed much of the remainder

to the *Roman de Troye* of Benoit and to the *Historia Trojana* of Guido delle Colonne. The story was based for the most part upon the mediæval Troy story which was subsequently utilised by Shakespeare and by Dryden. But it vivifies the beauty and passion of Criseyde and the humorous side of Sir Pandarus in a manner which was entirely fresh and strange to mediæval fiction. Boccaccio had used the *ottava rima* in his poem, but Chaucer uses the seven-line stanza with a mastery which indicates a rapid artistic growth about this period (1381-2). *Troilus* was followed by *The House of Fame,* a shorter poem of about a thousand octosyllabic couplets, in which more than in any other of his poems Chaucer seems to derive his inspiration from Dante. Next comes *The Legend of Good Women,* a misty prototype of Tennyson's exquisite *Dream* and the immediate precursor of *The Canterbury Tales.* For the details of his sad heroines Chaucer depends on Ovid, while as regards its general plan the poem is based more directly upon Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus.* The Italian, however, describes 105 women, while Chaucer limits himself to twenty, including Penelope, Helen, Lucretia, Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Laodamia, Canace, Ariadne, Medea, Philomena, and Alcestis. But of several of these the portraiture is barely commenced. The prologue to this poem is a worthy forerunner of the ripest production of Chaucer's pen, and the most famous, surely, of all prologues. Both it and *The Legend* furnish us with early examples of the great metre, that heroic couplet which was to become such a mainstay of English verse. Of the poems once ascribed to Chaucer, the two most notable and the most pleasing are *The Court of Love* and *The Flower and the Leaf.* The former was added to the canon by John Stow in 1561; the latter was first printed as Chaucer's by Speght in 1498. Both these poems have sime affinity with the court-like romances of the early



eighties of Chaucer's career, both are admittedly smooth and pretty, and both alike are relentlessly cut adrift by the critics and grammarians of to-day.

From his French models Chaucer had learnt much—the most approved allegorical conventions of the school, the art of poetical embroidery by means of the introduction of quaint and learned illustrations, with the knack of graceful and chivalric expression. Above all, he learnt from them the forms of verse. From them he also learned the conventional poetic amble, the concomitant qualities of which were tendencies to incoherence, to garrulity, and to interminable repetition, degenerating at worst into the merest gabble. From the Italians, especially from Dante and Boccaccio, Chaucer learnt lessons of higher value. From Boccaccio, as a real master of narrative, he learnt the secret of construction—how to plan a story and carry it out in due proportion. He derived many stories from him, and he is always at his best when he is put upon his mettle by Boccaccio. From Dante, too, he learnt many details of artistic workmanship. But his main discovery among the Italians was the secret of harmonious composition. He no longer wrote with the licence of a *trouvère*. He has, now, a keen eye for what is redundant and tautological; he retouches, connects, groups, generalises, composes. In all these directions his powers were approaching maturity at the time of his framing the scheme of *The Canterbury Tales*.

The idea of the Canterbury pilgrimage as a framework for a series of stories seems to have been Chaucer's own. When we compare it with the devices for linking together stories used by Boccaccio or the editor of *The Arabian Nights*, we see the inherent superiority of Chaucer's plan. A pilgrimage to Canterbury, occupying about a week during the spring-time, afforded a pleasant holiday to most varied forms of English society. It was a very common

plan for pilgrims to rendezvous at such an inn as the Tabard at Southwark, and to travel in parties on the road for purposes of safety. Chaucer brings his varied company of pilgrims before us with such vigour that, as Dryden said, one can see their humours, their features, and their very dress, as if one had supped with them at the Tabard.

Twenty-nine persons are gathered in all, who, for the space of a four days' journey, have the same object in view, and are going to live a common life. Forty-six miles from London is the shrine, famous all Europe over, which contains the relics of Henry II.'s former adversary—the chancellor Thomas à Becket, assassinated on the steps of the altar in December, 1170, and canonised about three years afterwards. "Mounted each on his steed, either good or bad—the Knight on a beast sturdy though of indifferent appearance, the hunting Monk on a superb palfrey 'as brown as is a berye,' the Wife of Bath sitting astride her horse and showing her red stockings—they set out, taking with them mine host of the Tabard; and there they go at an easy pace, along the sunny road lined with hedges, among the gentle undulations of the soil. They will cross the Medway; then will pass beneath the walls of Rochester's gloomy keep, then one of the principal fortresses of the kingdom, sacked but recently by revolted peasantry; they will see the cathedral church, built a little lower down, and, as it were, in the shade. There are women and bad riders in the group; the Miller has drunk too much, and can hardly sit in the saddle; the way will be long. To make it seem short each one will tell tales, and the troop on its return will honour by a supper the best teller."

It was a capital scheme, most excellently carried out, though not anything near to completion; for, instead of the hundred and twenty tales originally planned, only twenty were completed. One of the attractions of the



scheme is that Chaucer, with the true instinct of genius, took care that each of the stories should be such as the speaker might naturally have told. Each tale was suited to the teller. The young Squire tells a tale of Eastern romance, ever fascinating to youth. The tipsy Miller obliges with a loose and comical story. The honest Clerk moves every heart with the touching story of Griselda. The tales of the gentles are full of high sentiment and pathos. Between times the narrator is full of banter and satire, of ridicule of marriage and of priests. In treating of such themes Chaucer enjoyed the freedom of a Molière. Elsewhere, in depicting the horseplay of the common folk, he takes the licence of a Smollett, descending occasionally even to filth.

All the tales are bound together, and that much better than in Boccaccio, by little veritable incidents which spring from the characters of the personages, and are such as we light upon in our travels. The horsemen ride on in a good humour through green fields in the April sunshine, and they hold converse. The Miller has drunk too much ale, and will speak, and for no man forbear. The Cook goes to sleep on his beast, and they play practical jokes on him. The Friar and the Summoner get up a dispute about their respective lines of business. The Host restores peace, makes them speak or be silent, like a man who has long presided in the inn parlour, and has often had to check brawlers. They pass judgment of the stories they listen to—declaring that there are few Griseldas in the world, laughing at the misadventures of the tricked carpenter, drawing a lesson from the moral tale. The poem is no longer a mere procession, but a painting in which the contrasts are arranged, the attitudes chosen, the general effect calculated, so that it becomes life and motion: the effect is that of a convex mirror, giving a brilliant reflection of a society that was already passing away; it concentrates



the light of the past, the many-hued life and tumultuous movement of the Middle Ages, and projects the image with a dazzling clearness which penetrates the mists of the period of transition, and has become to modern England a possession beyond price.

The very form of *The Canterbury Tales* was expressive of consummate craftsmanship. The garden of Boccaccio, the supper-party of Grazzini, and the voyage of Giraldi make a good enough thread for their stories, but exclude all save equals and friends. By choosing a pilgrimage, Chaucer puts us on a plane where all men are equal. His cluster of holiday-makers represents a microcosm of English society in the latter part of the fourteenth century. By making the Host of the Tabard always the central figure, he has happily united two of the most familiar emblems of life—the short journey and the inn. The familiar life of the every-day world was exactly what interested Chaucer most, by the time he had reached his majority and had left off imitating the notes of others. Chaucer's metaphysical interests were small; there was very little of the moonlight and mystery and awe of the world in his poems; he seldom or never sounds the deeper notes of terror and of pity. The light upon his pages is that of common day. Among his most salient characteristics are tolerance and good humour. His motto might have been "Live and let live." Though he lived during the Hundred Years' War, and had himself been a captive, not a word in depreciation of the French nation will be found in his poems. No man thought more easily than he did or revealed with greater precision the sectional prejudices and strange egotisms which make up the human comedy. Yet he seldom or never strips the very heart and soul of a man of its integument. With Shakespeare a tragedy means the ruin of a man's mind. With Chaucer it is merely the external fall from high estate.



In his manner of depicting a man, from the external side only, he has more in common with Scott and Fielding than with Shakespeare;[1] yet there is no doubt that Chaucer stands with Shakespeare, Milton, and Tennyson—to whom some would add Burns and Byron, others perhaps Shelley and Wordsworth—among the *dii majores* of English poets. Nor shall we find reason to wonder at this, when we recognise the qualities that go to compensate for his defective sympathy with some of the profounder aspirations of the human intelligence. In defining these qualities, we can hardly do better, in the first place, than seek guidance from Dryden, the earliest and one of the best of English critics. Dryden's "Here is God's plenty" is still perhaps the best short criticism of Chaucer extant. "The father of English poetry," wrote Dryden, "Chaucer is a perpetual fountain of good sense. A man of wonderfully comprehensive nature, he followed Nature everywhere, but he is never so bold as to go beyond her. He knew where to leave off. As for his versification, he regarded it presumably as being accommodated to the ears of his own time, somewhat uncouth, but with a rude sweetness as of a Scots tune about it." Let us compare this with some of the characteristic features discovered by one of the best of Chaucer's modern critics. As a narrative poet, says Professor Lounsbury, Chaucer has no equal in our tongue. As a pioneer of English versification, it may be said of him, as of Augustus, that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble. Among other distinctive features, he would specially have us observe the originality of his treatment of borrowed material, the naturalness of his language, the apparent absence of effort in his writing, and the refined

[1] "If we could take thirty per cent. of Goldsmith, fifty of Fielding, and ten of Sir Walter Scott, and vitalise this compound with the spirit of the fourteenth century, we should get perhaps fairly near to another Chaucer."—A. W. POLLARD.



FROM THE PAINTING BY T. STOTHART, R.A.

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS



sportiveness which continually corrects and relieves the English tendency to a dull seriousness. Among his characteristic defects he instances the intrusion of irrelevant learning, improper digressions, rude dialects, steep anachronisms, and an unreasonable fondness for the sententious Boëthius. The general conclusion we are compelled to draw is that Chaucer was a supreme artist, and the conviction is strengthened when we consider the rich humour (the accumulated fund of a man of the world, who had seen and heard all that was best in his time) which permeates almost every poem that he wrote. No one has surpassed Chaucer in good-humoured banter, a quality which the poet possessed in such perfection that he was able continually to laugh at himself without a suspicion either of bitterness or of bad taste. If character may be divined from an author's writings, Chaucer was a good man, genial, sincere, hearty, temperate of mind, more wise perhaps for this world than the next, but thoroughly humane and friendly with God and men. To this profound humanity of soul Chaucer joined that marvellous power of speech which is the talisman of the great poet.

For four out of the five centuries which have elapsed since his death, Chaucer's poems were so imperfectly transcribed and printed, that "he who hardly ever wrote a bad line, and whose music and mastery of words are almost unrivalled, was apologised for as some rude rhymer." His works were praised for their *learning*, printed in black-letter as an antiquarian curiosity, paraphrased and translated, till he could not himself have recognised them. As a matter of fact, Chaucer's work, so far from being "rude," was nearly all of the highly finished variety; and, in strong contrast to Shakespeare, the poet took a keen interest in the text of his poems. He went so far as to utter a memorable malediction against all careless



scribes. In spite of the misdeeds of such nefarious persons, Chaucer's text has come down to us in a very fairly satisfactory state.

There are existing about fifty manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales,* none dating back to the poet's lifetime, but several to the fifty years which followed his death: the two best of these are the Ellesmere MS. and Harleian MS. 7334 in the British Museum. There are numerous diversities among the manuscripts, due to the normal corrupting influences to which the work, whether of professional scriveners or monkish scribes, is ordinarily liable: viz. carelessness; misreadings, due to ignorance; conceited corrections, in the supposed interests of grammar, local usage, style, or morality. Caxton, a great admirer of Chaucer, printed *The Canterbury Tales* in 1478, and again in 1483. They were reprinted by Pynson, 1492, and Wynkyn de Worde, 1498. In 1532 Francis Thynne prepared a collective edition of Chaucer's works, including many pieces that were not really by Chaucer. In 1598 Thomas Speght issued an edition with a very erroneous life, based upon materials collected by Leland and John Stow the antiquary. These texts remained the standard ones for many years; and inasmuch as they were based upon a manuscript now lost, they are still valuable for purposes of comparison. With the idea of tinkering the prosody into conformity with our language as it is now refined, Urry played fearful havoc with the old grammatical forms in his edition in 1721, in which the text was first emancipated from black-letter. *The Prologue* and *Knight's Tale* were edited as a specimen, in 1737, by Thomas Morell. Thomas Morell's work marked a great advance in the direction of conservative scholarship, but it was surpassed in every way by the work of Thomas Tyrwhitt, whose great edition of *The Canterbury Tales* was brought out in 1775, and was followed by a fifth



volume containing a glossary in 1778. Tyrwhitt was to Chaucer what Theobald was to Shakespeare and Spedding to Bacon—one of the few great English editors; like Steevens and Malone, he was thoroughly saturated in black-letter.

Thomas Wright had the audacity to impugn Tyrwhitt's scholarship, and especially his text, which he described as "made up." Accordingly, between 1847 and 1851 he brought out a new text, based, not upon a collation, but upon a single manuscript (Harleian 7334, in British Museum). Whether from a linguistic or a literary point of view the result was in every respect inferior; but it marked the dawn of a great Chaucerian revival. In 1862 a great advance was made by Professor Child's studies in Chaucerian grammar. In 1867 the foundation of the Chaucer Society was due to the indefatigable zeal of Dr. Furnivall, and through its agency great strides have been made in the study of the versification, pronunciation, and philology of the poet. The indirect influence of these studies has been to make men more familiar with Chaucer's English than were our forebears of the eighteenth century. Since the time of Gray and Warton and Scott there has been a great revival of old literature and old art, and a very tangible outcome of this has been the introduction of a number of old words. As Hugo and Merimée invigorated French by the revival of old words, so in England, only rather before in point of date, Scott and Keats gave a fresh currency to numerous words and expressions. The revival of old literature such as *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Piers Plowman,* and of the old drama, and the renewal of love for the English of the Bible and what Chesterfield called "the bad English of the Psalms" —the whole tendency, in fact, of the art of such men as Tennyson, Holman Hunt, Pugin, Sir Gilbert Scott, Rossetti, Ruskin, and, above all, perhaps William Morris,



for whom the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot be said to have existed—was to bring the Englishmen of their generation infinitely nearer to the Middle Ages than were those who lived in the ages of Dryden and Pope, and even of Dr. Johnson. The resultant of all these forces has been the devotion of an ardent yet minute study to Chaucer, and the evolution of a text which is probably superior to that we shall ever have of Shakespeare. This is partly due to the fact that numerous manuscripts of Chaucer remain for comparison,[1] and partly due to the fact that, unlike Shakespeare, Chaucer hardly ever wrote carelessly, hurriedly, or obscurely. He is, moreover, very regular in his versification, and was very averse to sacrificing perspicuity in the interests of condensation. Some of Chaucer's words are still unexplained, some of his allusions have never been cleared up; but his constructions have been mastered, and the general drift of what he has to say is never in doubt.

Chaucerian scholarship may be said to have had two flowering periods,[2]—one in the middle of the eighteenth century, which resulted in the ripe fruit of Tyrwhitt's

[1] Six of the best manuscripts—Ellesmere, Hengwrt, Cambridge Univ., C. C. C. Oxford, Petworth, Lansdowne—were edited side by side by Dr. Furnivall for the Chaucer Society (1868).

[2] The vicissitudes of Chaucer's fame form the subject of a very interesting passage in Churton Collins's essays on the predecessors of Shakespeare: "Take Chaucer. In 1500 his popularity was at its height. During the latter part of the sixteenth century it began to decline. From that date to the end of William III.'s reign—in spite of the influence which he undoubtedly exercised over Spenser, and in spite of the respectful allusions to him in Sidney, Puttenham, Drayton, and Milton—his fame had become rather a tradition than a reality. In the following age the good-natured tolerance of Dryden was succeeded by the contempt of Addison and the supercilious

edition; the second in the sixties of the nineteenth century, and the outcome the excellent editions which are now in our hands: Skeat's critical edition * (Clarendon Press) of Chaucer's *Complete Works* (7 vols., 1894-7); the Globe edition of the *Works* (1 vol., 1898); and Lounsbury's edition of the *Complete Works* and glossary (2 vols., New York, 1900). These texts are based nominally upon the same materials, but they vary considerably in detail, showing the different criteria of judgment, both as regards literary taste and relative importance of manuscripts. Whereas, too, Skeat's edition normalises the orthography, the Globe follows a single manuscript (the Ellesmere), wherever its reading is feasible. Yet the differences between the scholars are small compared with those between the would-be popularisers of the poet. As there have been two harvests of Chaucer's criticism, so there have been two distinct movements for the modernisation of *The Canterbury Tales:* (1) that associated with Dryden and Pope, and (2) that culminating in the efforts of Leigh Hunt, Richard Horne, Wordsworth, and Cowden Clarke. The phraseology, spelling, and constructions of Chaucer being in many respects obsolete, it was the object of these admirers of the "Homer of English poetry" to attire his best productions in a modern garb. The scholars have almost with one accord discountenanced these attempts, and have covered their projectors with contempt and ridicule. That much is inevitably lost in the process of translation is a proposition which is of course unassailable. Yet it is mere affectation to maintain, as many

patronage of Pope. Between 1780 and 1782 nothing seemed more probable than that the writings of the first of England's narrative poets would live chiefly in the memory of antiquarians. In little more than half a century afterwards we find him placed, with Shakespeare and Milton, on the highest pinnacle of poetic renown."



Chaucerians do, that an untrained reader can master essential peculiarities in the space of an hour, and can then enjoy his Chaucer with the best. The number of persons competent to enjoy the niceties of Chaucer's art is necessarily restricted; but the number of persons who could enjoy the substance and matter of his poems, irrespective of the precise manner of presentation, is unbounded—a consideration which inclines one rather strongly to sympathise with Dryden, when he says, "I think I have just reason to complain of those who, because they understand Chaucer, would deprive the greater part of their countrymen of the same advantage, and hoard him up as misers do their grandam Gold, to look on it themselves and hinder others from making use of it."

For general criticism of Chaucer the ordinary reader will do well first to scan what the literary historians have to say: among them he will find much admirable criticism in Stopford Brooke,* Henry Morley, Taine, Jusserand, Chambers, and Ten Brink*; above all, in Warton's and in Courthope's respective histories of English poetry.

If the reader has need of a Chaucer manual, he has again a considerable choice. There is an excellent little *Chaucer Primer*, by Mr. A. W. Pollard; there is also a highly condensed *Guide to Chaucer and Spenser*, by F. G. Fleay (1877); *The Age of Chaucer*, by Mr. F. J. Snell (1901); and Dr. Ward's *Chaucer*, in the Men of Letters Series; in addition to Skeat's *Student's Chaucer* (1895) and *The Chaucer Canon* (1900). For interesting reading about Chaucer the reader will probably find most to entertain him in the three volumes of *Studies in Chaucer* (London, 1892), by a Yale professor, T. R. Lounsbury. These studies form a series of agreeable, if somewhat diffuse, magazine essays rather than an organic book. In the later stages of his Chaucer course the student will naturally depend much on the Transactions of the Chaucer Society. Yet more important, perhaps, than any of these aids to study is the light thrown upon the subject by such essayists as Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, Alexander Smith in *Dream-*



thorpe, and J. R. Lowell in *My Study Windows*. Among notable periodical essays should be mentioned two articles in *Blackwood* (vols. ii. and lvii.); two in *Macmillan* (vols. xxiv. and xxvii.)—one by Stopford Brooke, the other by Furnivall; and two in *The Quarterly* (January, 1873, emphasising the affinity between Chaucer and Shakespeare; and April, 1895, a review of Skeat's edition of Chaucer).



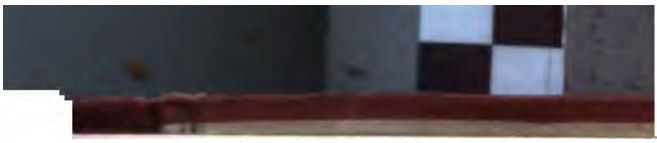
CHAPTER III

MORAL GOWER—THE "MORTE D'ARTHUR"

"O moral Gower, this book I directe
To thee, and to the philosophical Strode,
To vouchensauf, ther nede is, to corecte,
Of your benignitees and zeles gode."
—CHAUCER, *Troilus and Criseyde.*

Warton's criticism of Gower—*Confessio Amantis*—Sir Thomas Malory—*Morte d'Arthur*—Its influence in English literature.

CHAUCER'S *Canterbury Tales* was probably the fourth separate book printed by Caxton at Westminster, and is usually dated about 1478. Five or six years later the printer produced a second edition of the *Tales* with woodcuts. About the same time that he produced this second edition, or perhaps a little before it, Caxton set to work on a folio edition of Chaucer's recognised foil, John Gower. He tells us himself that he finished printing the *Confessio Amantis* on September 2nd, 1483. Two years later he gave to the world *The Noble Histories of King Arthur and of Certain of his Knights,* by Sir Thomas Malory (Westminster, folio, July 31st, 1485). As, among the eighty odd books which Caxton printed at Westminster, these are two of the most famous (if not quite the most famous, with the exception of two or three of Caxton's translations and the three books of Chaucer's which he printed), we shall give here some account of the books and of their authors, as being early examples of the work of the printing-press in perpetuating sound literature.



John Gower was born before Chaucer, probably in the early twenties of the fourteenth century (1323-6). He came of a Kentish family, and appears to have been a man of some consideration and an esquire in his native county. It would seem as if he gained his wealth, or it was gained for him, as a merchant; but it is difficult to reconcile the immense volume of his poetry with active commercial life. In later life he must have been practically a literary recluse. He died in August or September, 1408, leaving a widow, Agnes, and was buried in the Priory of St. Mary Overy (now St. Saviour's Cathedral, Southwark), to the rebuilding of which he was a generous contributor.

The best and most concise account of Gower's poetry is that given by Thomas Warton in his *History of English Poetry* (1778). "Gower's capital work," says Warton, "consisting in three parts, is entitled *Speculum Meditantis, Vox Clamantis, Confessio Amantis.*" The third and last portion of this work was completed in 1393. The first, or *Speculum Meditantis,* was written in Anglo-French twelve-line octosyllabic rhymes in ten books, dealing primarily with the nature of virtue and vice, the errors of man, and the path of regeneration through the aid of our Lord Jesus Christ and the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whose life the poem ends by commemorating.

The second poem, the *Vox Clamantis,* or voice of one crying in the wilderness, contains seven books of Latin elegiacs; it is primarily a metrical chronicle of the great social upheaval of 1381, denouncing Wat Tyler, the rabble rout, the maddened serfs, and the Lollards in no measured terms; but pointing out at the same time the grievances by which the community was burdened, the rapacity of the clergy, the knavery of lawyers and merchants, the prevalence of sensual indulgence, extortion, and rash governance. In later years (being then a staunch adherent



of Henry IV., who had conferred on him the Lancastrian emblem or collar of SS) Gower appended to his poem a *Chronicon Tripartitum,* dealing in a tone of far greater candour with the misgovernment of Richard II.

The *Confessio Amantis* is an English poem containing a prologue, seven books on seven deadly sins, and one on the duties of a king—in all over thirty thousand eight-syllabled rhymed lines—first printed by Caxton in 1483. The ravages of the seven sins, Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony, Lust, are illustrated by a series of stories loosely strung together somewhat after the manner of Boccaccio's *Decameron.* The book was written at the command of Richard II., who, meeting the poet rowing on the Thames near London, invited him into the royal barge, and, after much conversation, requested him to "book some new thing." In spite of age and infirmity Gower laboured nearly ten years at the composition and revision of this poem, completed in 1393 (with additions criticising the government of Richard II., which it is difficult to place before 1397).

"Considered in a general view," says Warton, "the *Confessio Amantis* may be pronounced to be no unpleasing miscellany of those shorter tales which delighted the readers of the Middle Ages." And when he has a tale to narrate, it must be admitted that Gower does his duty by it. In the unfolding of a narrative, however well worn the theme may be, there is an ease and a fluency about Gower's development of the story which is suggestive of the ripeness as well as of the garrulity of old age. The worst of Gower's stories is that we always know they are there merely to furnish occasion for a homily. They are usually illustrations of deadly sins—never, as in *The Canterbury Tales,* of concrete personalities. The dramatic element hardly came within Gower's purview. Gower's characters are perambulating moralities—remote,



indeed, from the breathing types of the Tabard.[1] The rival poets seem to have been more closely allied in friendship than in art; it is true that we find Gower making a playful hit at the irrepressible garrulity of Canterbury pilgrims, and Chaucer marvelling at the latitude assumed by moralists in their choice of illustrations; but the one irreparable blow which the younger poet inflicted upon the vitality of his senior by dubbing him for all time "Moral Gower" can only have been undesigned.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, completed in 1470, was the last important work finished before the introduction of printing, and our knowledge of it depends wholly upon the printed text, for no manuscript of it is known to be extant. Caxton printed it in 1485 in response to a demand for a book about the single English representative among the nine worthies. The author, Sir Thomas Malory, Knight, the son of John Malory by Alice, daughter of John Revell, served under Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, Captain of Calais, about 1430, was knighted in 1445, and sat for Warwickshire in Parliament. He finished his book at his seat of Newbold Revell, in Warwickshire; died next year in March, 1471; and was buried at the Grey Friars, near Newgate. There is evidence to

[1] Chalmers included the work in his *Collection of English Poets*. The first modern edition is that of 1857, by Dr. R. Pauli, who embodied the biographical discoveries made by Sir Harris Nicolas in *The Retrospective Review*, and showed Gower's relations to the political history of the time. A popular edition was included by Prof. Henry Morley in his *Carisbrooke Library* (1888), and Gower was also treated at considerable length in the fourth volume of his *English Writers*. The first really critical edition adapted for philological study was that of Gower's *Opera Omnia* in French, Latin, and English, prepared for the Clarendon Press by Prof. G. C. Macaulay (1899), who has also (1903) edited *Selections from the Confessio Amantis*.



show that he marched under the standard of Edward IV. against the Lancastrian forces in the North in 1468, and that he was subsequently excluded, as a member of Warwick's faction, from the general pardon granted by Edward in that year. He was probably born in the reign of Richard II., and thus serves as an important link in our literature between Chaucer and Caxton, who roughly edited the work which Malory had left unrevised. The popularity of the romances of chivalry which Caxton had translated from the French may very possibly have been the stimulus which prompted Malory to undertake the work in the closing years of his life. But Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is much more than a translation; it is, in fact, a welding together from different fabrics of the main sources which go to forming the Arthurian cycle. By the perfect adaptation of his treatment to the subject, Malory succeeded in handing down the romance, with unimpaired freshness, from mediæval to modern literature. In both form and style the compilation compares very favourably with the *Cent Nouvelles* and other French *recueils* of the period.

In the main, however, the work is, what Caxton declares it to be, "done out of certain books of French," such as the *Merlin* of Robert de Borron and his successors, the French romances of *Tristan* and of *Lancelot,* with supplementary additions from some manuscript metrical romances in Old English on the *Morte d'Arthur.*

In spite of the heterogeneous character of its component parts, it must be admitted that the *Morte d'Arthur* is singularly liable to the charge of monotony. The repetition of incidents, of images, and of phrases may be likened to that in the earlier Indian epics and in the later pseudo-epic of Ossian. The texture out of which the romance is woven is the embodiment of the literary imagination of the Middle Ages. The colouring and imagery

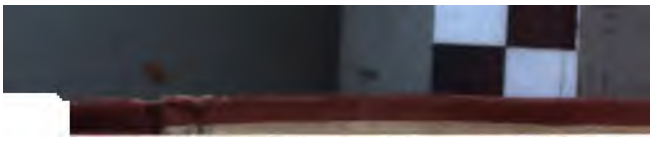


appeal almost exclusively to those who combine an instinctive love for mediæval romance with strong imaginative and visualising power. To the uninitiated reader the artistic convention which characterises the phrasing has no power of carrying conviction, and the power of deriving pleasure from the narrative is limited to a bare appreciation of the story. By such the *Morte d'Arthur* is best appreciated through the medium of a paraphrase. Only by those readers whose poetic instinct is stimulated by the surpassing colour and imagery of the detail can the *Morte d'Arthur* be assimilated with a genuine sense of enjoyment. To the romantic poets in a special degree the *Morte d'Arthur* has been an inexhaustible fountain of allegory and of poetic inspiration. It was freely used by Spenser for his *Faerie Queene,* by Tennyson for his *Idylls of the King,* by Swinburne for his *Tristram of Lyonesse,* and by Matthew Arnold for his *Tristam and Iseult;* while in the present day it has formed the staple of the quaintly perfumed romances of Maurice Hewlett.[1]

[1] Subsequent to Caxton's folio of 1485 six black-letter editions of the *Morte d'Arthur* appeared between 1498 (Wynkyn de Worde) and 1634. A three-volume edition by Haslewood in Roman type appeared in 1816. Another, with an introduction by Robert Southey, in 1817. Later editions include one by Thomas Wright, 1856; the Globe edition, with introduction by Sir E. Strachey, 1868 (the best of the modernised editions); and the standard *Le Morte d'Arthur, by Syr Thomas Malory, reprinted and edited, with introduction and glossary, by H. O. Sommer, with an essay on Malory's prose style by Andrew Lang* (3 vols., 1889-91). Another very elaborate edition, though with a modernised text, is *Le Morte d'Arthur . . . with introduction by Professor J. Rhys, and illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley* (2 vols., 1893-4). Malory's indebtedness to the respective manuscripts has been laboriously traced by Oskar Sommer in his edition; most of the later and more highly embellished versions of the legend can be followed back to a common original through such works as the alliterative *Morte*



Arthur of the Scots poet Huchown, the *Lancelot* of Walter Map, the *Brut* of Layamon and Wace, and the *Historia Britonum* of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The substratum of the vast body of Arthurian legend was the fabulous tale of the wizard Merlin (a relic of the old Celtic mythology), and of the obstacles which Arthur had to surmount before he reached his rightful throne. Upon this were grafted tales of knightly fortitude, of erring passion, of mortal feud. And the whole was surmounted by the mysterious legend of the Quest of the Holy Grail—the legend, that is, of a protracted search for the blood of Christ, preserved in a small casket or vessel of some kind after the Crucifixion by Joseph of Arimathea. This curious fable was of far later date than the nucleus of Arthurian tradition, and there seems little doubt that it was originally brought from the East by the early Crusaders. For the older strata of Welsh mythic romance the reader is referred to the series entitled *Popular Studies in Romance, Mythology, and Folklore*, published by the accomplished Celtic scholar David Nutt. He may then proceed to Professor Rhys's *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (1891), a work of the highest authority, but one that presupposes a considerable knowledge of the subject—more especially of the writer's own Hibbert Lectures on *Celtic Heathendom* (1888). It must be admitted that neither the *Confessio Amantis* nor the *Morte d'Arthur* can stand the juxtaposition of *The Canterbury Tales*. Their vivid humanity renders Malory wan, attenuated and bloodless in comparison. Ascham and Latimer attacked its morals, and it went into a long eclipse from 1634 to 1816; but it emerged then to strike a priceless blow for purity and brevity in speech-craft as opposed to the tasteless, polysyllabic verbiage of the post-Johnsonian school.



CHAPTER IV

THE SCOTS POETS

"What Voltaire said of Dante is literally true of such poets as Henryson, Douglas, and Dunbar. We simply take them on trust."—CHURTON COLLINS.

The Chaucerian tradition in Scotland—Robert Henryson—*Robene and Makyne*—William Dunbar—*The Golden Targe*—Comparisons of Dunbar with Chaucer and Burns—Gavin Douglas—Sir David Lyndsay—His religious satires.

THE arbitrary date 1475 is followed in English literature by a century of second-rate writers, in other words, of preparatory and tentative work. Among the names of those who, for want of better, we must describe as the leaders in English literature, there is not one that evokes enthusiasm, there is scarcely one that awakes an echo in the halls of remembrance. It is perhaps somewhat difficult to believe, but is yet the fact, that when we have enumerated Hawes, Skelton, More, Tyndale, Latimer, Wyatt, Ascham, Surrey, Udall, to whom might possibly be added Lord Berners, Heywood, and Foxe, we have named all the prominent writers of the century that followed Caxton in England. It is true that they produced among them one book of quite the first rank (the *Utopia*), but that was written in Latin. In Scotland it was very different; there the true Chaucerian tradition was handed on, and brilliant verse in Chaucer's vein was deftly wrought by apt pupils.

Most Chaucerian of these Scottish disciples of the English maker was Robert Henryson (an interesting link between the days of James I. and those of James IV.), who seems to have been educated abroad before he was

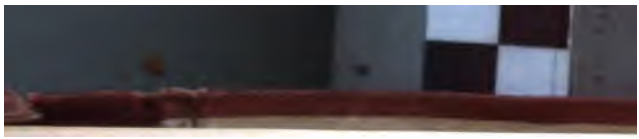


admitted at Glasgow University in 1462. Subsequently he became schoolmaster at Dunfermline, and died there at a ripe old age before 1506, when Dunbar mentions him as one of the departed. The principal works of Henryson are *Moral Fables of Æsop, Orpheus and Eurydice, The Testament of Cresseide* (a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*), and the early pastoral (perhaps it should be described as the earliest, as it is certainly one of the best, in the English tongue) *Robene and Makyne.* This last, as its merit deserves, is the best known of Henryson's poems; it was included in Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry* and in many later anthologies. Robin and Marion were traditional names for rustic lovers in the Middle Ages. The earliest pastoral play in France, by Adam de la Halle (thirteenth century), bears the title *Robin et Marion.*

The amount of character and of local colour which Henryson managed to impart to these pieces is striking; they are full of playful satire, while as delineations of contemporary manners they merit a close appreciation. Behind the rude and archaic phraseology of *Robene and Makyne* lies hid an eclogue of a very high poetic merit.

This charming little pastoral may be termed a "sport" in Scottish literature, for we have nothing like it again until we come to Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd.* It is written in ballad metre, to which Henryson recurs in *The Bludy Serke* (the story of a blood-stained garment, bequeathed by a mortally wounded knight to a king's daughter, whom he had rescued from a giant's dungeon), and in the quaint alliterative *Garmond of Gude Ladeis.*[1]

[1] A large proportion of Henryson's poems were first printed from manuscript sources by David Laing in 1865—largely from George Bannatyne's manuscript in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh, and from the Maitland manuscripts in the Pepysian Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge. The *Morall Fabillis* were, however, printed in 1570, and *The Testa-*



But the greatest of these Scottish disciples of Chaucer was admittedly William Dunbar[2]—"Dunbar quha language had at large," as Sir David Lyndsay compendiously called him. Of less tender and graceful fancy than either James I. or Henryson, Dunbar had more original genius. In choice of subjects he has some affinity with Jan Steen

ment of Cresseide in 1593. Selections from Henryson have been very numerous. Allan Ramsay gave some in his *Evergreen* (1724), so did Percy and Lord Hailes. There is a good one, with glossarial notes on every page, in G. Eyre Todd's *Mediæval Scottish Poetry* (Glasgow, 1892). The standard edition is *The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson (first collected, with notes and memoir), by David Laing* (Edinburgh, 1865).

[2] The chief predecessors of Dunbar in Scottish poetry were: (1) John Barbour, a pensioner of King Robert II., and Archdeacon of Aberdeen, who wrote his versified chronicle or rhyming narrative of the wanderings, trials, sufferings, and fortitude of the great Robert Bruce about 1376-8, and died at Aberdeen, at a good old age in March, 1396. (2) Andrew of Wynton wrote a somewhat similar but inferior rhyming chronicle from the beginning of the world down to 1406. Then comes the famous *Kingis Quair* (The King's Quire or Book) of (3) King James I. Born in 1394, James was captured by the English at sea in 1406, and was imprisoned for eighteen years, mainly in the Tower of London. While in prison James was carefully educated; he became a disciple of Chaucer, and, though the point is much disputed, there is still good reason to believe that he and no other wrote the *Quair*—a beautiful description of love at sight and of the solace derived from love by a captive; a classic example of the love allegory first developed in Italy and France, but naturalised in England by Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde;* and written in the seven-line stanza of *Troilus*, known since the time of Gascoigne as the "rhyme royal." James I., who was murdered in 1437, was followed at the other end of the social scale by (4) Blind Harry the Minstrel, who flourished about 1470, and wrote a patriotic chronicle in heroic verse on *Wallace*, founded mostly on traditional stories of the national hero.



or Hogarth, but his outlines are as sharp and relentless as Dürer's. With a Heinesque ribaldry and malice he combines something of the fatalistic temper of Villon. *Timor mortis conturbat me,* he groans.

Dunbar graduated at St. Andrews University in 1479, being then probably near twenty years of age. He was at one time a Franciscan friar, in which capacity he made good cheer on the English roads; but he seems to have thrown off the habit and taken to diplomacy. Subsequently he took priest's orders (in 1504), but he continued to lead the life of a courtier, and his name disappears significantly after the battle of Flodden (September 9th, 1513).

Dunbar's most celebrated poems were *The Thistle and the Rose, The Golden Targe,* and the allegorical satire called *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins. The Thistle and the Rose* was a political allegory, occasioned by the marriage of James IV. of Scotland with Margaret Tudor, eldest daughter of Henry VII., King of England—an event in which the whole future political state of both nations was vitally interested, and which ultimately produced the union of the two crowns and kingdoms. It was finished on May 9th, 1503, in plenty of time for the Queen's arrival in Scotland after a magnificent progress from Richmond to Edinburgh. The Rose is hailed Queen by the flowers, and her praises are sung by a chorus of birds, the sound of which awakens the poet from his dream.

The design of Dunbar's *Golden Targe* is to show the gradual and imperceptible influence of love when too far indulged over reason; it is tinctured throughout with the morality and imagery of *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Flower and the Leaf* of Chaucer. The opening scene of the rising sun on the spring landscape is delineated in the manner of Lydgate, yet with more strength, distinctness, and exuberance of ornament. It concludes with the



laboured eulogy of Chaucer ("flower imperial and rose of orators"), Moral Gower, and Lydgate laureate.

In dealing with the seven deadly sins, Dunbar was treating a hackneyed theme. *The Romaunt of the Rose* personifies a series of heinous sins. Chaucer, in *The Parson's Tale,* expounded them at some length; Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is composed of tales illustrating the same deadly seven; Lydgate had treated the theme somewhat differently in his imitation of the old French *Danse Macabre.* Dunbar's *Dance* describes a procession of the sins personified before the devil in hell, and the conception is vigorously, and at the same time humorously, handled. The devil having commanded the dance to begin, the seven deadly sins appear, and present a mummery (in imitation, it may be, of one of the miracle or clerk plays, as they were called in Scotland), with the newest gambols, just imported from France.

Among the shorter poems, of which Dunbar is prolific, several dwell upon the irredeemable flight of time and the ruthless stroke of death. One of the best of these is *The Lament for the Makaris,* written when he was ill, probably about 1507. His short meditations on the "Headache" and on "Wyntir" show him to have been a connoisseur of melancholy. But Dunbar was a man of an infinity of moods; the shadow on human existence could not escape his saturnine humour; yet he was well disposed to be cheerful, and even merry—witness his "Without Glaidnés availis no Tressour" and "For to be blythe me think it best." From his *Surrexit dominus,* his realistic *Passioun of Christ,* or his grand nativity chant opening with the Latin descant *Rorate celi desuper,* we turn to a scene of satirical comedy such as *The Treatise of Two Married Women and a Widow,* in which he fathoms the depths of obscenity. There is a delightful pendant to this in the Dutch cabinet-piece of *The Twa Cummers,* two old gossips,



a Sairey Gamp and Betsey Prig of the sixteenth century, over their mutchkins, complaining, "This lang Lentern makis me lene." Everywhere alike his poetry is resonant with verse-craft, and is nourished by a thousand freshets of sparkling wit. A couplet glistens and one breathes the sharp air of the northern spring. Yesterday, says he, the season soft and fair

> Come in as fresh as peacock fedir;—
> This day, it stingeth like an addir.

A beautiful example of complimentary verse is afforded in Dunbar's panegyric of London, with the burden, "London, thou art the flower of cities all!" composed in 1501, to be recited by the Scottish envoys at the court of Henry VII.

Dunbar undoubtedly owed much to Chaucer, whom he revered as a master; but to call him a Scots Chaucer is in reality, as we have hinted, to render him a disservice; for he inherited little of Chaucer's special endowment, and his own best qualities are anything but Chaucerian. He entirely lacks the genial humanity, the indefinable charm, the width of view, and the sustained inspiration of the English maker. Chaucer's dramatic talent, and still more his reflective power, find no counterpart among the many gifts of Dunbar, who is one of the most self-centred of bards, always brooding over the good fortune of others and the ill-luck of William Dunbar. It is more to the point to compare him with his greater descendant, Robert Burns—the Burns of saturnine humour and insight, who wrote *The Jolly Beggars* and *Tam o' Shanter,* but a Burns deficient in passion and in pathos, who wrote, not for the people, but for the court, and was much less easily stirred by the sentiment of patriotism.[1]

[1] The metrical side of Dunbar has been studied not only by Professor Schipper (now of Vienna), but also by H. B. Baildon in *On the Rimes in the Authentic Poems of Dunbar*



The third member of this Scottish *pléiade* was Gawin or Gavin Douglas, born at Tantallon Castle about 1474, third son of Archibald, Earl of Angus, who figures so prominently in *Marmion* as Bell-the-Cat. After education at St. Andrews and Paris he rose into high office, on the strength of his family interest; was nominated to the See of Dunkeld, and promised the Archbishopric of St. Andrews; but when the Douglas party was overthrown in 1520, Gavin fled to England, and died in exile at the court of Henry VIII. in September, 1522.

Douglas's chief work was his translation of the *Æneid* of Virgil, completed on July 22nd, 1513.

The obvious faults of his version are many. He frequently expands one line into six or more, and is almost always very diffuse. He deliberately paraphrases and transforms the text—as, for instance, where he makes the sibyl in the sixth book a nun. His diction, moreover, is much more archaic even than that of Dunbar, and he

(1899). Eight of Dunbar's poems were printed by Chepman & Myllar at Edinburgh in 1508. A mutilated copy of this unique book is in the Advocates' Library. The *Poems* were printed by Pinkerton in his *Ancient Scottish Poems* (vol. i., 1786), and were collected, with a brief memoir, by J. Paterson (Edinburgh, 1860). They were first adequately edited, with a memoir and notes, by David Laing* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1834-5), with supplement, 1866. The best edition now, however, is that of the Scottish Text Society (in 2 vols.), edited by J. Small, to which an excellent study by Sheriff Æneas Mackay is prefixed in a separate volume (1889). There are selections of Dunbar, with modernised spelling, by G. Eyre Todd, in *Mediæval Scottish Poetry* (vol. ii., 1892), and by Hugh Haliburton (adapted to present-day Lowland Scots), 1895. Some of the best poems are well modernised in H. M. Fitzgibbon's *Early English Poetry* (1887). There is a first-rate article on Dunbar in *Blackwood* (February, 1835), and a slighter one by F. R. Oliphant in the same magazine (September, 1893).



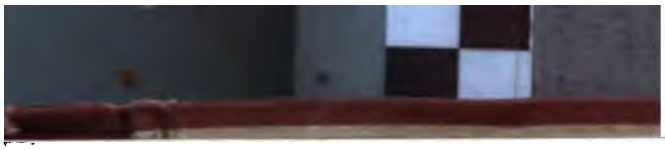
makes up a number of new words from the Latin. With all its faults, however, it was largely imitated by Surrey and other translators. The best poetry is in the independent prologues. These are free creations, descriptions of Scots landscape, not wholly unconventional or free from the missal-picture style of ornamentation, yet frequently rising above this to a sincerely felt interpretation of the moods and harmonies of Nature. His *Winter Peece,* his *May Day,* his *Welcum to the Lamp of Day* are still good to gladden the heart.[1]

The fourth poet in this remarkable group is Sir David Lyndsay. Born about 1490 at Monimail, Fifeshire, he was educated at St. Andrews, and became the companion, playfellow, and whipping-boy of the brilliant James V. In 1529 he was knighted and made Lyon King of Arms, or chief of the Scots heralds. He went on several embassies, sat in the Scots Parliament for Cupar, and died at Monimail early in 1555.

A satirist keen and racy—rude in every sense of the word — Lyndsay was highly popular with his fellow-countrymen. Repeated editions came out between 1558 and 1776; and of anything not worth saying, "Ye'll no find that in Davie Lyndsay" became proverbial.

> Still is thy name in high account
> And still thy verse has charms,
> Sir David Lindsay of the Mount,
> Lord Lion King-at-Arms.

[1] *The XIII Bukes of Eneados, translated into Scotch Metir* was printed in 1553 (4to), and carefully reprinted by the Bannatyne Club in 1839. Select works of Douglas were printed by Pinkerton in *Ancient Scottish Poems* (1786), and separately at Perth in the following year; again together with Dunbar by J. Sibbald in his *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry* (1802). The best edition of to-day, with memoir, notes, and glossary, is that by J. Small (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1874); but a full critical edition of Douglas is still a desideratum.



His caustic censure lashed the monks and friars as freely as Butler scorched the pseudo-saints in *Hudibras* or Burns the Ower Gude in *Holy Willie*. He lays his grasp upon the bridle-rein of the sleek prelate and upbraids him with his secret sins in words ill-fitted for modern ears. Nor does he spare the King and his advisers, or the meanness of the merchant class, or the extravagance of court ladies, whose long skirts he devotes a lay to ridiculing. His breadth and licence are those of a chartered libertine. Nor can he have failed to smooth the way for the reformers, though he avoided a direct breach with the Roman Church. Ecclesiastical corruption was rife, and he probed it shrewdly. Many a man has been burnt for less; for though he did not attack theological mysteries and said nothing of the Mass, his demands squared well with those of the early Protestant martyrs. He insisted on the use of the vulgar tongue in the Liturgy, protested against the mumbling of prayers in half-understood Latin,[1] and jeered in the freest manner at pilgrimages, processions, relics, and pardons; yet he managed to avoid the semblance of cutting deeply by an affectation of grotesque clownage which disarmed a serious resentment. The very indecencies of his humour would have made a solemn prosecution for heresy seem ludicrous; and there is little doubt that, as with

[1] In *Kittie's Confession* a demure-looking curate confesses (and would have kissed) a personable wench:

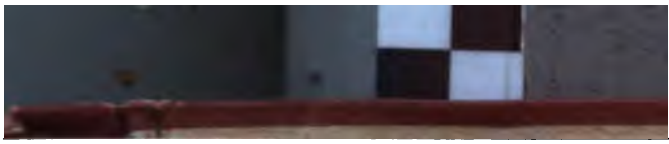
> "Said he, have ye na wrongous gear?
> Said she, I stole a peck of beir.
> Said he, that should restorèd be,
> Therefore, deliver it to me! . . .
> And mekil Latyne did he mummill—
> I heard nothing but hummil bummill."

Such dramatic scenes as this, and several in *The Satire of the Three Estates*, serve to justify the description of Lyndsay as a rude Scots Aristophanes.



Rabelais, the expedient of indecorum was deliberately adopted to embarrass clerical interference.[1]

[1] A full bibliography of Lyndsay's works, with facsimiles of the title-pages of the chief editions, is given in David Laing's *Complete Edition* (Edinburgh, 1871). For the four Scots poets dealt with in this chapter, see T. F. Henderson's studious monograph on *Scottish Vernacular Literature* (1898).



CHAPTER V

EARLY TUDOR POETRY

"In Henry VIII.'s reign sprang up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyat the elder, and Henry, Earle of Surrey, were the two chieftains."—PUTTENHAM, *Arte of English Poesie.*

"That Time's best makers and the authors were
Of those small poems which the title bear
Of songs and sonnets."—DRAYTON.

Stephen Hawes—Alexander Barclay—John Skelton—His pictures of low life—Skeltonic verse—Sir Thomas Wyatt—His metrical innovations—Earl of Surrey—His use of decasyllabic blank verse.

THE early Tudor kings, Henry VII. and Henry VIII., imported their court painters, Mabuse and Holbein, from abroad. It seems a pity that they could not have imported, say from Scotland, their court poets; for of the tribe of courtly makers Stephen Hawes and John Skelton can scarcely be described as brilliant representatives.

An Oxford man of reputed Suffolk origin, Hawes was commended to Henry VII. as a scholar formed by travel, a complete gentleman, and a master of languages. His chief poem, *The Passetyme of Pleasure,* was written about 1505-6, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde about 1512. In form it is one of the old-fashioned allegories; through Hawes, in fact, mediæval allegory sang its last courtly note. A swan-song of which one note at any rate still vibrates in the couplet:

For though the day be never so long,
At last the belles ringeth to evensong.



During the last years of Henry VII., Alexander Barclay, a Scot by descent, though apparently a native of the South of England, possibly Croydon, was writing a book which made almost as great a stir in its own day as *Gulliver's Travels* did in that of the first George; this was a version, or rather paraphrase, of Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* (or *Ship of Fools*), printed by Pynson in December, 1509. The bulk of Barclay's version, constituting a ponderous and extravagantly didactic satire, was thrown into the form of the Chaucerian stanza, but parts are linked together by passages in prose, while the metre is occasionally varied.[1] Homely in style, Barclay was fairly harmonious in manner, and there was enough pith in him to make his work long popular. *The Ship of Fools* suggested the machinery of that formidable satire of Henry VIII.'s reign called *The Bowge of Court*, by John Skelton, laureate, the whip of Wolsey, and the father of English doggerel,—"beastly Skelton," as Pope calls him.[2]

[1] *This Present Boke, named the Shyp of Folys* . . . (printed by Pynson, December, 1509, folio). A modern edition, with some account of Barclay, appeared in 1874 (London, 4to), and a notice of Barclay's Life and Writings, by T. H. Jamieson, in the same year. See, too, Herford's *German Influence on English Literature in Sixteenth Century*.

[2] *Bowge* (Bouche) *of Court* signifies the King's Table; the name is given to an ornate vessel in which Skelton embarks in quest of the purchasable commodity, court favour. Skelton's anarchical versification, known as Skeltonic or Skeltonical, has often been imitated; he may have caught the lilt of it himself from the tavern harpers of his day. Echoes of his pungent rhymes and playful word coinage may be found in Butler, Swift, Peter Pindar, Southey, Thackeray (*Peg o' Limavaddy*), but the velocity of his verse has seldom been equalled. Skelton handed on to Spenser the name of *Colin Clout* for a religious satirist or reformer. The resentment of his enemies encompassed him about, and it was in an asylum that he died on June 21st, 1529 (buried in chancel of St.



Skelton's elegy on the Sparrow is a *tour de force* of a kind rare in any literature; yet it seems characteristically English. When Catullus bewailed the death of Lesbia's bird, he confined himself to eighteen truly exquisite lines; but "ragged, tatter'd, and jagged" Skelton, while lamenting the Sparrow that was "slain at Carowe" has engrafted on the subject so many far-sought and whimsical embellishments that his episode is really what the old editions term it—a "boke."

The whole poem is an extraordinary arabesque, in which wit, pedantry, imagination, and burlesque are strangely intermingled. Nursery rhymes, strongly suggestive of the death and burial of Cock Robin, are blended with Macaronic verses full of irony and mischief, and not seldom indecency. Skelton's wayward rhymes, which are well termed "breathless" (so much breath do they require in reading them aloud), are often miracles of skill; and similarly his verse, from its volume and volubility, is well compared to the ribands out of a conjurer's mouth at a fair. Skelton imitates low life with the coarse relish of a Dutch painter, while as a master of the repulsive he challenges Swift and Hogarth.

Sir Thomas Wyatt, born at Allington Castle in Kent, in 1503, was the son of Sir Henry Wyatt, a strong Lancastrian, and faithful adherent to the House of Tudor. He took his degree at Cambridge (St. John's), at the age of seventeen. His distinguished bearing and appearance aided his progress at the Court of Henry VIII. We soon

Margaret's, Westminster). *The Poetical Works of Skelton* were edited in two volumes by A. Dyce (London, 1843, 8vo), and a new *Selection*, containing *The Bowge, Phyllyp Sparowe, Colin Cloute*, and *Why come ye not to Court?* (ed. W. H. Williams), appeared in 1902. A fresh edition (which is a desideratum) is understood to be in contemplation by A. F. Pollard for the Clarendon Press.



find him travelling abroad on diplomatic missions, and in 1530 he was High Marshal at Calais. He knew Anne Boleyn well, and is said to have warned Henry VIII. against her light character, having had cause himself, many believed, to rue that same levity. He was sent to the Tower upon her fall, but was very soon released.[1] He went as envoy to the Emperor Charles V. in 1537, and was sent to Flanders again in 1540. Wyatt's official correspondence shows him to have been a man of quick observation and an excellent writer. The penetration which he showed into the Emperor's character was remarkable. After Cromwell's fall, however, in June, 1540, Wyatt's enemies, particularly Bishop Bonner, procured his imprisonment; he was arrested and sent to the Tower on a charge of having defamed the King, and having conspired with Reginald Pole against him. After an eloquent defence Wyatt was acquitted and restored to favour in the summer of 1541. He spent most of the next year in retirement, but he died from a chill caught on the hurried journey to Falmouth to receive the Emperor's ambassador in the autumn of 1542. He was buried at Sherborne on October 11th. His poems ran only at court until, in 1557, a shrewd stationer, one Richard Tottel, collected them and the MS. poems of rival courtiers (271 in all) into the

[1] The career of Anne Boleyn is still shrouded in much mystery. It is probable that Wyatt long cherished a secret affection for her. They were children together, and Anne wrote to him from Paris in 1515 as "your loving little Nan." She is certainly the "Anna" of several poems, and the platonic attachment between the two must have been alluded to in the lines:

> "Forget not—oh! forget not this,
> How long ago hath been and is
> The love that never meant amiss,
> Forget not yet."



volume of *Songes and Sonnettes,* dear to the heart of Master Slender.[1]

Two very marked and contrary features distinguished Wyatt's poetry—the individual energy of his thought, and his persistent imitation of foreign models. The former is what separates him sharply from the poets of the Middle Ages. Hitherto, with the exception of *The Canterbury Tales,* almost every English poem of importance had been didactic in intention, thereby denoting its clerical source, and symbolical in form, thus revealing the influence of the allegorical method of interpreting Nature and Scripture encouraged in the Church schools. Wyatt, on the other hand, looked at Nature through his own eyes, and sought to express directly the feelings of his own heart. He was a man of many moods and ideas; his compositions include love verses, epigrams, devotional meditations, satires, and in all of these the force and ardour of his thought is sensibly felt. But equally in all of them the poet shows himself to be aware of the imperfection of his native language as an instrument of expression, and submits himself with humility to the superiority of the foreign masters whose manner he seeks to reproduce.

As a metrical innovator Wyatt is specially to be remembered for his attempt to Anglicise the Italian sonnet. The sonnet form was probably originally cultivated in Provence, but as a vehicle of poetical expression it was perfected and its form arbitrarily fixed by Petrarch, who stands for the sonnet in European literature much as Milton stands for

[1] Of the various editions of Wyatt's works appearing since that day, by far the most important is the one edited by Dr. G. F. Nott (Surrey and Wyatt, in 2 vols., 1815-16). The text given here differs materially from that found in the *Miscellany,* for it is based upon Wyatt manuscripts discovered by Nott, and the number of poems is also considerably augmented. The Aldine edition of 1866, with a memoir by T. W[right], has a good reproduction of Holbein's portrait.



blank verse and La Fontaine for fables. Ordinarily Petrarch wrote two kinds of sonnets; they closely resemble each other, and may be called normal types. The Petrarchan sonnet consists of fourteen decasyllabic lines, and is divided into two parts:

(1) The octave of two quatrains, often called the bases of the sonnet. This octave must only have two rhymes, but these two rhymes must be well varied; the eight lines of the octave should also end upon a full-stop or point.

(2) The sextet of six lines, which may have two or three rhymes variously arranged, but always in such a manner as to avoid the formation of a rhyming couplet in the last two lines.

As regards theme, the sonnet must be self-contained and homogeneous. Ordinarily speaking, the first eight lines give a broad exposition of the motive, and the last six a special application of it. In the first eight lines the thought ascends to a climax; in the last six the idea descends to a conclusion.

Nevertheless, by inborn faculty, Wyatt excelled rather in worth of poetic matter than in elegance of form or diction. His best poems are not imitations, but lyrics written for the accompaniment of the lute in simple metrical forms. His best innovation was not the introduction of Italian measures, but the revival of that lyrical mood which had produced some charming snatches of English verse in the thirteenth century, and had then almost entirely died away, Chaucer himself having but a faint touch of it.

The Earl of Surrey was to some extent a disciple of Wyatt, though his poems have none of the vehement individuality and character which distinguish the style of his predecessor. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was great-grandson of that Duke of Norfolk ("Dickson of Norfolk") who fell in the cause of Richard III. at Bosworth

Field. Neither the place nor the exact date of his birth can be settled with precision; but Kenning Hall, in Norfolk, is suggested by his indefatigable biographer, Dr. Nott, as the most probable birthplace, and the year 1516 as the date for his birth best coinciding with the known facts of his career. Surrey was carefully educated, studying classical and modern (Italian) literature, and trying his hand at verse from boyish years. The antiquary Leland was his brother's tutor, and may also have instructed him. He was placed in the Court at the early age of nine as cup-bearer to Henry VIII., and from the age of fifteen he was about that monarch's person. The spirit of poetry was not long in manifesting itself in him, and he associated it, as is familiar to many who have never read a line of his poems, with the lady of the illustrious House of FitzGerald, Earls of Kildare, and since Dukes of Leinster. Dr. Nott pointed out, as detracting somewhat from the romance, that the "fair Geraldine" was but a child of six years when the youthful and chivalrous poet adopted her as his "ladie," and celebrated her beauty and virtue in one of the loveliest of our early sonnets.

In April, 1545, Surrey was recalled from his command in France through the intrigues of the Earl of Hertford (afterwards Protector Somerset). The exposure of Katherine Howard and the ignominy which attached to that connection no doubt rendered Henry exceptionally ready to listen to anything to the discredit of her relatives, and many stories of Surrey's rashness and impulsive nature were current. Both Surrey and his father were on bad terms with Hertford, whom they disliked and despised as the representative of the new nobility, and whom they sought to supplant in the confidence of the King. In August, 1546, Hertford and his friends trumped up a charge against Surrey of quartering the royal arms upon his shield, and of aspiring to the succession upon Henry's



death. Henry was genuinely afraid that Surrey's headstrong nature might lead him to dispute the succession of a boy of ten, and attempt to smash the windows, not of London citizens, but of the Tudor dynasty. Surrey was found guilty on January 15th, 1547, and a week later was brought to the block on Tower Hill. His remains, after interment at Barking All Saints', were eventually deposited at Framlingham.[1]

As far as regards the subject-matter of his poetry, Surrey must be regarded as the follower of Wyatt. Almost all his poems deal with the subject of love, the fair Geraldine taking the place of the dark-eyed Anna of his predecessor. Ninety-six of his love poems to forty of Wyatt's were included in *Tottel's Miscellany* of June, 1557. Some of these are irregular sonnets (a great improvement upon those of Wyatt in form of construction, though not based upon the Petrarchan model); others, *canzoni* composed either in *terza rima* or in long verses of twelve and fourteen syllables; others, again, in the form of short lyrics.

Perhaps the most important of Surrey's achievements as poetical inventor (and he did much to form the prosody and reform the diction of his day) was the distinction of having been the first to make use in English of decasyllabic blank verse. This he did with daring originality in his translation of two favourite books in Virgil's *Æneid*—the second with the account of the downfall of Troy, and the fourth containing the Dido episode. In his phraseology and diction Surrey was indebted to Gavin Douglas, and in regard to the innovation of blank verse there is little doubt

[1] In addition to Dr. Nott and the authorities cited for Wyatt, the reader must refer to Ed. Bapst's *Deux Gentils-hommes Poètes* (1891), and to Schipper and J. B. Mayor on Surrey's metres. Certain *Bokes of Virgiles Ænais, turned into English meter by the right honourable lorde, Henry Earle of Surrey*, were printed in black-letter by Richard Tottel, Fleet Street, June, 1557.



that the novelty was suggested by the translation of these same two books of the *Æneid* by Francesco Maria Molza, published at Venice in 1541. Surrey's *Æneid* was published after his death in 1557. The selection of heroic verse for the translation was only a natural one, but in making it Surrey was the first Englishman to take the successful venture of employing the verses in simple succession without any connecting rhymes. His Italian predecessor had set him an example in this, and even if Surrey knew not Molza he could not have been unaware of other Italian endeavours of a similar kind, whether in the form of drama or in elegies. He certainly applied the new principle with skill, and showed considerable power over the new instrument by varying the place assigned to the rhythmical pause. It was not, however, until many years later, in the hands of Christopher Marlowe, that the potentialities of this new species of verse could be thoroughly appreciated.



CHAPTER VI

EARLY TUDOR PROSE

"Libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festivus."

Lord Berners' Froissart—Fabyan's *New Chronicles*—Richard Grafton—John Leland—Andrew Boorde—George Cavendish—Grocyn and Linacre—John Colet—Sir John Cheke—Roger Ascham—*The Scholemaster*—Latimer—Sir Thomas Elyot—Sir Thomas More—*Utopia*—Its influence in literature.

Of the chief prose writers during the two reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., covering a period of over sixty years, it is proposed to give a classified rather than a chronological survey. Hitherto English prose had been strictly limited in kind. There were, of course, chronicles and letters, translations and treatises. Annals, theology, and law had engrossed by far the greater part of the activity of English prose writers. Only a few years before the crowning mercy of Bosworth (1485) Malory had adapted prose to the purpose of highly imaginative narrative, and it was soon to be bent to other fresh uses. New forms of literature are now rising, and they are associated everywhere with the battle of opinion which, like the first movement of sap in plants, is a first condition of health, growth, and fruit-bearing. The example of the Italian courts had strengthened the faith of king and courtiers in the skilled use of the pen. Henry VIII. among his courtly makers attacked Luther in a treatise, and composed some tunable songs. He was soon to defy the Pope of Rome, like Shakespeare's King John, and to make himself Pope of England, to the exceeding great joy of the Lollard remnant, and of the much greater section of the



community who either hated or coveted, as the case might be, the power and the wealth of Rome.

Commencing in the old paths of chronicle and translation we pass on to the outpourings of our first really great English antiquary, John Leland; the early English eccentric and merry-andrew, Boorde; and our first distinctive and individual biographer, George Cavendish. The great humanistic movement was now beginning effectually to quicken English thought, especially through the influence of the universities. Linacre and Grocyn, Colet and Erasmus, lead us to More, Elyot, and Ascham. But the Renaissance in England soon becomes merged in the Reformation, of which we have a noble representative in Latimer, although for the most fundamental work of our English reformers in the evolution of the English Scriptures, the liturgy, and other formularies of Protestant doctrine, we must refer our readers to a special chapter a little later on.

The chief work of Lord Berners (*c.* 1467-1533), his famous translation of Froissart, was undertaken by the express command of Henry VIII. The first volume was printed by Pynson in 1524, the second in 1525. It may be freely admitted that Berners shows a gentlemanly indifference to pedantic niceties of style, whether French or English. He makes no pretence to superior qualifications for the work. In the preface to the Froissart he speaks of his "rude translation"; and elsewhere he speaks of his lack of facility in English, and his incomplete study of French. This unpretentiousness had one capital result; the translator attempts no soaring flights, but keeps his nose down close to the phrasing of his original. When his author is clear, Berners is comparatively lucid, but when there are hard words or difficult constructions he is apt to become confused. The difficulty is often due to the printed text of the French, which was not derived from



the best manuscripts and is full of corruptions; yet he is frequently very careless both in translating his French and in constructing his English, while instead of correcting the English proper names, of which the French-speaking Froissart had made a most admired havoc, he frequently makes matters worse by incorrect transcription. With all his faults, however, Berners, with his unformed fifteenth-century English, probably represents the spirit of the original better than any accurate version in modern prose could do. There is a vigorous picturesqueness about his phrase, and a vitality about the utterances of his personages, for the loss of which no amount of grammatical concord with the original could possibly atone. He has, too, this unique advantage—that he was born within seventy years of the death of Richard II., the event with which his translation terminates. His diction is, on this account, not too far removed from the time of his author, or from the famous acts and glorious deeds in which the ancestors of the translator and his readers alike had borne their share.

"It is well to read Froissart," writes Taine to his sister, "but do not seek facts there. Simply remark and make a note of the picture of manners. For the rest, read it like a romance. You can read Rollin in the same way, but that will profit you less." In reading Froissart, nevertheless, we are reading the history of the fourteenth century, breathing the spirit and the very air of that age of infinite variety, in which the knight-errant appears side by side with the plundering adventurer, while popular uprisings sound the first note of alarm to feudal oppressors, and the schism of the papacy leaves an open door to the religious reformer. The *Chronicles* only really cover two reigns in any detail, but these two reigns—of Edward III. and Richard II.—make up the greater part of the fourteenth century. The chief landmarks of the book are exploits of war—Sluys, Crecy, Calais, Poitiers,



Najara, Limoges, Wat Tyler's Revolt, Rosebeque, and Otterburn—concluding with the coronation of Henry IV. The whole forms a great pageant of court and camp, of barons, captains, archers, sieges, and fierce "journeys," or noble adventures of feats of arms. As we read it, we seem to be unrolling a length of ancient tapestry, displaying an animated crowd of knights and ladies with a background of castles, tilts and tournaments, unfaded in colour, harmonious in grouping, yet presenting to the eye no regular or uniform picture.

From the glittering pages of Froissart as rendered by Lord Berners one turns sadly to the tedious homespun of our native chroniclers such as Fabyan and Hall, representatives of English history under Henry VII. and Henry VIII.

Fabyan's *New Chronicles of England and France,* the concordance of histories, was printed by Pynson in 1516 in two parts: Part I., from the mythical Brut of Geoffrey of Monmouth to Henry II.; Part II., from Richard I. down to the accession of Henry VII. Successive continuations carried the work down to the enthronement of Elizabeth. Each year is dealt with separately under the heading of its Lord Mayor, and much space is devoted to the London Corporation and to the details of blood-curdling executions. More attractive, perhaps, is the so-called chronicle of Edward Hall, another Londoner, who studied at Eton, Cambridge, and Gray's Inn, became a common serjeant, and died in 1547. The character of Hall's book is shown in its title: *The Union of the Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and York,* commencing with Henry IV. and ending with Henry VIII.; printed by Berthelot in 1542. Hall's chronicle is a glorification of the House of Tudor and a justification of all the acts of Henry VIII., especially as regards Church matters. Hall is far superior to Fabyan in style, and the limitation of his subject enables him to invest it with considerable dramatic



interest. He uses the Latin history of Polydore Vergile to some extent as a groundwork, but for the early years of Henry VIII. he becomes an original authority. Some of his descriptions are very vivid and were closely followed by Shakespeare, in *Richard III.* for instance. Later historians also, such as Grafton, Holinshed, and Stow, borrowed very largely from Hall.

Richard Grafton (died 1572) was an important printer and stationer, who printed the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549. He edited the metrical chronicle of John Hardynge, brought down Hall from 1532 to 1546, and in 1568 brought out a chronicle of his own, entitled *A Chronicle at Large and Mere Historye of the Affayres of England.*[1]

Of greater intrinsic value than these chronicles is the work of our first great (extra-legal) antiquarian scholar, John Leland, who was educated first at St. Paul's School, under the celebrated grammarian William Lilly, grandfather of the Euphuist, and then at Cambridge, Oxford, and Paris. Henry VIII., with his undoubted gift in discerning talent, encouraged Leland in every way, making him Chaplain Librarian and King's Antiquary, in addition to according him a special permit to examine the historical records of the country. From 1536 to 1542 Leland travelled all over the kingdom. His tours were as extensive as those of Defoe, but his survey was not so much social and economic as topographical and antiquarian. He visited towns, villages, castles, cathedrals, and monasteries; ransacked libraries for valuable books and records; hunted out coins, inscriptions, and ancient works of art; and even collections in

[1] The scientific value of these chronicles is not perhaps great, but they mark progress in the history of English prose as a vehicle of narrative. They were all edited and indexed by Sir Henry Ellis between 1809 and 1816. On Berners, see W. P. Ker, *Essays on Medieval Literature*, 1905.

what we should now call folk-lore, in which pursuit his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and of Welsh stood him in valuable stead. He also made large biographical collections which took shape in four books of British biography entitled *De Viris Illustribus*. Like the contemporary work of Bishop John Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Brittanniæ Catalogus* (1548-1559), Leland's Lives are disfigured by many avoidable errors and fables, but are noteworthy as being first in a series of efforts leading up to the *Biographia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Having fulfilled the tasks of both the Nepos and Varro of his age, poor Leland died insane in *Parts of England and Wales,* was not printed until 1710, 1552, and his greatest work, the *Itinerary through most* when it was taken up by the great Oxford antiquary, Thomas Hearne.[1]

While we are on the subject of the topographers and biographers of Henry VIII.'s generation we must not altogether omit mention of Andrew Boorde (1490-1549), who punned his name into "Perforatus," a fantastic prototype of Tom Coryate, or of George Cavendish, author of a well-known *Life of Cardinal Wolsey*. Boorde travelled in Europe from Sicily and Spain to Denmark, partly as a political agent of Thomas Cromwell. His most important journey, however, was a purely recreative ramble by Antwerp, Cologne, Venice and Rhodes to Jerusalem, and back by Naples, Rome, and the Alps. He wrote an *Itinerary of Europe,* which has unfortunately perished; but he has left a *Book of the Introduction of Knowledge*[2] which is, in effect, a kind of handy guide to European travel.

[1] Leland's MSS. had, however, been preserved in the Bodleian and Cotton Libraries, and their riches were largely drawn upon by such famous antiquaries as Camden, Drayton, Stow, Burton, Dugdale, and Wood.

[2] Boorde's *Introduction* and *Dietary* were edited by Dr. Furnivall for the Early English Text Society in 1870.



As a corrective to the coarse lampoons of Skelton it is desirable for the student of the period to read the pious *Life of Cardinal Wolsey,* written about 1557 by the great prelate's gentleman usher, George Cavendish (1500—1562). A devout Conservative and Catholic, Cavendish wrote in an old-fashioned style, with something of the archaic diction of an ancient chronicle. As a record of unwavering fidelity, entirely free from pretension or artifice, his book has an attraction and a literary grace of its own, apart from its critical or artistic merits, which are small. It is the production of a refined, pious, and gentle nature, which looks over many years of quiet melancholy upon a period when he, too, had borne a part in great affairs. The story of Wolsey's death is memorable for the use which seems to have been made of it in the great Elizabethan pageant play of *Henry VIII.* If Shakespeare or Fletcher saw it at all, they must have seen it in MS.[1]

The early part of the reign of Henry VIII. was honourably distinguished by the great encouragement given to humane letters, and especially to the teaching of Greek at Oxford and Cambridge.[2] Before the end of the fifteenth century William Grocyn and Thomas Linacre brought back from Italy both knowledge of and enthusiasm for

[1] Cavendish's book was extensively circulated in manuscript long before it was printed. It was published in a garbled form in 1641; first separately edited from the author's autograph MS. by S. W. Singer in 1815; reissued with an introduction by Professor H. Morley in 1885; and beautifully printed with original spelling by William Morris, Hammersmith, March, 1893. Cavendish's book is well described in *Retrospective Review,* v. 1-44.

[2] For the rise of the New Learning, more especially at Oxford, and in connection with Colet, Erasmus, and More, see Frederic Seebohm's delightful *Oxford Reformers,* 1867, 3rd ed. 1887.



the newly found authors of antiquity. They established the study of Greek at Oxford, where they were soon followed by John Colet, who became Dean of St. Paul's, the founder of the Cathedral School there, and the friend of Erasmus and More. Cambridge followed a little later, and the great Erasmus lectured there in Greek for a short time. After him came Sir John Cheke (d. 1557), who became Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and is remembered as "the professor who taught Cambridge and King Edward Greek." Of the pronunciation of that language, moreover, he set up the standard which has ever since prevailed in England. Cheke produced a number of learned and controversial works in Latin. His most notable work in English was a pamphlet, published in 1549, under the title of *The Hurt of Sedition*, a somewhat uncritical denunciation of the agrarian rising in Norfolk under Robert Ket. Cheke in turn was followed at Cambridge by his more brilliant pupil, Roger Ascham.

Roger Ascham was born near Northallerton in 1515. His father was house steward in the family of Lord Scrope. He himself was placed in the family of Sir Anthony Wingfield, under whose patronage he entered St. John's College, Cambridge. At Cambridge Ascham joined the progressive party in education, and applied himself diligently to the study of Greek. He was made a fellow of his college, gathered many pupils about him, and was in 1538 appointed Greek reader at St. John's. Besides his proficiency in Greek, Ascham was distinguished for the purity of his Latin epistles and for his beautiful handwriting. Many of his scholars rose to great eminence, and among them William Grindal was so much distinguished that, by Cheke's recommendation, Ascham was called to court as a proper master of languages for the Lady Elizabeth. In defence of his pastime, archery, and to show how well he could handle Platonic dialogue, he wrote and dedicated to



Henry VIII. in 1545 the masterly little treatise called *Toxophilus.* For this treatise, long regarded as a model of prose style, Ascham received a yearly pension of £10 from the King. He was also chosen orator to the University of Cambridge in the place of Sir John Cheke.

In 1563 Ascham was invited by Sir Edward Sackville to write *The Scholemaster,* a treatise on education. The book sprang out of a conversation after a dinner in Sir William Cecil's chamber at Windsor. A number of scholars at Eton had run away from the school for fear of beating, and the question arose whether it were better to make the school a house of pleasure or a house of pain. Ascham, as the model pupil of a model teacher, Sir John Cheke, was appealed to by Sackville to decide the issue. The book, commenced with so much alacrity, in the hope no doubt of a considerable reward, was interrupted by the death of the patron, and afterwards sorrowfully and slowly finished in the gloom of disappointment under the pressure of distress. But of the author's disinclination or dejection there can be found no tokens in the work, which is conceived with great vigour, and finished with great accuracy, and perhaps contains the best advice that was ever given for the study of languages. The treatise was practically completed, but Ascham did not live to publish it. He died of a wasting illness on December 30th, 1568. The printers showed no eagerness to print the book, which lay unseen in his study, but was eventually dedicated by his widow, Margaret Ascham, to Sir William Cecil in 1570. Of Ascham's other English works there remains to mention *A Report and Discourse of the Affairs and State of Germany,* an interesting contemporary account of European politics during the critical time of the struggle between Charles V. and Maurice of Saxony.[1]

[1] The whole works of Roger Ascham were edited by Dr. J. A. Giles, 3 vols. 1865. *Toxophilus* and *The Scholemaster* have



Another advocate of the long-bow, who wrote his native tongue with a racier idiom and a homelier strength than Ascham, was Hugh Latimer, the son of a Leicestershire yeoman whose armour the boy had buckled on in Henry VII.'s reign during the Cornish rebellion. Born at Thurcaston about 1486, Latimer threw himself into the cause of New Learning at Cambridge with a zeal fully equal to that of Ascham, but he was destined to be known not as a scholar, but as a preacher. He is well represented in two volumes of Professor Arber's invaluable reprints—*Seven Sermons* and *The Ploughers*. The description of his father's house and of the England of his youth is well and deservedly known. He had a plain, shrewd style and a command of graphic detail that ranks him with Bunyan, Defoe, and "Poor Richard." He had an exceptional gift for the jocose. His sermons were full of happy instances and "merry toys," such as the story of the white-bearded old man of Kent, who asserted that the building of Tenterden steeple was the cause of the Goodwin Sands, *because* before it was built the Goodwin Sands gave no trouble to Sandwich Haven. He was also a master of taunts and fleers. At the trial just before his death he mocked the Bishop of Gloucester in such wise that the court roared with laughter. He had little turn for speculation, but intense moral earnestness, backed up by no small store of irony and invective. "His homely humour breaks in with story and apologue; his earnestness is always tempered with good sense; his plain and simple style quickens with a shrewd mother wit. He talks to his hearers as a man talks to his friends, telling stories of his life at home as a boy, or chatting about the changes and

both been reprinted by Prof. Arber, and *The Scholemaster* by J. E. B. Mayor, with a Life of Ascham by Hartley Coleridge, 1873 and 1884. There is an agreeable article on the *Toxophilus* in *Retrospective Review*, iv. 76-87.



chances of the day with a transparent simplicity and truth that raises even his chat into grandeur. His theme is always the actual world about him, and in his simple lessons of loyalty, of industry, of pity for the poor, he touches upon almost every subject from the plough to the throne. No such preaching had been heard in England before his day, and with the growth of his fame grew the danger of persecution." Latimer was protected by Henry VIII., and his Lutheran sympathies allowed full sway down to 1540, when the reaction set in. He was then imprisoned and forced to resign his See of Worcester. Under Edward VI. he was, of course, a powerful influence, but on Mary's accession he was promptly sent to the Tower as an extreme Protestant. His rough jeers at the supposed miraculous images of the Virgin rendered him obnoxious to the Catholics. When charged with heresy at Oxford in October, 1555, Latimer firmly refused to recant and appealed to a general council. On October 16th he and his junior, Bishop Ridley, were handed over to the secular arm for execution in the ditch over against Balliol College, Oxford (nigh where the Martyrs' Memorial now stands).[1]

Another of the early masters of English prose, who deserves a place between Ascham and More, more, per-

[1] Separate sermons by Latimer were printed during his lifetime; twenty-seven were issued in 1562, 4to. Some of the best were selected by Leigh Richmond in his *Fathers of the English Church*, 1807, vol. ii.; they were issued in a more complete form by the Parker Society, 1844-5, 2 vols., edited by George Elwes Corrie. There is a strong and moving account of Latimer in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and there are Lives by Gilpin (1755), and by Demaus, revised edition, 1881. The accounts of Latimer in Burnet's *Reformation* and Froude's *History*, Tulloch's *Leaders of the Reformation*, and in *Blackwood*, vol. lxix, should also be read. There is a modern Life in the Leaders of Religion Series, by R. M. and A. J. Carlyle, 1899.



haps, on account of his versatility than on any distinctive merit of style, is Sir Thomas Elyot (d. 1546), himself a diplomatist and the son of an eminent judge. As a scholar and a humanist he owed much to More, at whose house he was a frequent visitor. His most famous book was an ethical and educational treatise dedicated to Henry VIII. in 1531, and styled *The Boke named the Governour.* Full of borrowed wisdom as it was, it proved eminently adapted to the wants of the age, and passed through numerous editions. Its primary object was to discuss the education and training of those who might one day be called upon to fill leading positions in the commonwealth. To many readers, however, it must be admitted that the chief interest of *The Governour,*[1] with all its merits, will always lie in the fact that it is the original authority for the delightful story of the righteous judge Gascoigne and the insubordinate Prince Hal. Elyot passed the story on to Hall, from whose chronicle Shakespeare derived it. Elyot borrows many other notable instances from the Bible, from the fathers, from classic antiquity, and from English history, both in *The Governour* and in his subsequent works, such as *The Castle of Health, The Banquet of Sapience,* 1534, *The Image of Governance,* 1540, and *The Defense of Good Women,* 1545. In 1538, with the aid of a loan of books from the king, he compiled a Latin-English dictionary called *Bibliotheca,* which far surpassed anything of the kind that had hitherto appeared in Eng-

[1] A very complete reissue of *The Governour* was edited by Henry Herbert Stephen Croft, from the first edition of 1531, in 2 vols., 1880. The edition contains a full Life and an elaborate glossary. For a very detailed examination of the credibility of the Prince Hal story, which Mr. Croft regards as originally a monastic legend, see vol. ii. 60-71. As a translator Elyot followed Barclay, Skelton, and N. Udall. The noted French Grammar of John Palsgrave first appeared in 1530.



land—the old *Promptuarium Parvulorum,* for instance, first printed by Pynson in 1499. This great lexicon was remodelled by Bishop Thomas Cooper, and published in 1550 under the title of *Thesaurus.*

Sir Thomas More, a son of a justice of the King's Bench, was born in Milk Street, London, on February 7th, 1478, and as a boy was sent as a page to the household of Archbishop Morton, by whom he was sent to Oxford. Morton, it is said, often remarked to his guests upon the genius which he perceived to be latent in the youthful page. He began his legal career under brilliant auspices, and his prospects were greatly improved by the accession of Henry VIII. He was made Master of Requests in 1514; was appointed successively Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Speaker of the House of Commons; was sent on diplomatic errands to France and Germany, and in 1529, on the fall of Wolsey, against his own wish, was made Lord Chancellor. Both as a man and as a lawyer More was strongly conservative by temperament. He was very bitter in his denunciation of advanced religious opinions, especially those of what he called the pestilential sect of Tyndal and Luther, and had little sympathy for stubborn heretics. He naturally witnessed with grave disapproval the course of events which were eventually to turn the Defensor Fidei into the head of a schismatic Church. In May, 1532, he sought and obtained permission to resign the chancellorship. He retired to his house at Chelsea, and devoted himself to his family and their studies. When, however, in April, 1533, he was called upon to subscribe upon oath to the Act of Succession, involving his acquiescence in the King's headship of the Church and the royal divorce, he steadfastly refused to sacrifice his conscience to Henry VIII., and after a year's harsh imprisonment in the Tower was beheaded on Tower Hill on July 6th, 1535. John Fisher, himself an impressive preacher and



author of two short treatises of genuine beauty, *A Spiritual Consolation* and *The Ways of Perfect Religion,* suffered a like death for a similar cause a fortnight earlier. It was not safe, wrote one scholar to another, to relate how much feeling was moved throughout the whole kingdom by the death of such good men.

Utopia seems to have owed its immediate origin to an embassy in which More was engaged in 1515, when he was sent by Henry VIII. in company with Cuthbert Tunstall, afterwards Bishop of Durham, to confer with the ambassador of Charles V. on the question of a renewal of alliance. And "since our business did admit of it (says More) I went to Antwerp," where among the many who visited the distinguished Englishman was one whom he describes as more acceptable to himself than any other. This was Peter Giles (Ægidius), a man of great humour and good rank in his town, with whom More contracted a close friendship. It was at Antwerp about November, and probably after many conversations with his new acquaintance, that More wrote the second book of *Utopia;* the first was written later after his return to London early in 1516. In October, 1517, More wrote to Erasmus to say how glad he was that Ægidius likes his Nusquama (Utopia). Erasmus wrote next month to say that the MS. of Nusquama was in great request and was about to be placed in the printer's hands. It was accordingly printed at Thierry Martin's Press at Louvain in December, 1516, with the title *Libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festivus de optimo reip. statu de que nova Insula Utopia.* The volume has no pagination. First comes the picture chart of the island of Utopia; then the Utopian alphabet, in which A to L are represented by circles or curves, M by a triangle, and N to Y by rectangles or portions of rectangles, dashes being used with them for the sake of further diversity; then a short "meter" of Utopian written by



Anemolius, poet laureate—verificatory details worthy of a Defoe or a Swift. The book was received by a chorus of praise. More could only hope that it was all sincere. Erasmus caused all his friends to read it, and wrote to More that a burgomaster at Antwerp was so delighted with the new *Res publica* that he had it all by heart; he suggested that the author might become the ruler of the Utopian people. More wrote with delightful humour deprecating the high honour, but adding that should it please Heaven to exalt him to this high dignity, while too high to think of common acquaintances he will still keep a warm corner in his heart for Erasmus and Tunstall.[1]

The polity of Utopia was a confederation of free city-states. There were forty-four of these cities in the island, all large (holding at least six thousand families) and well built, and all formed and governed upon one uniform plan. Each had twenty miles of soil round it and assigned to it, and each sent up three of its wisest senators once a year to the chief city Amaurote (shadowy) to consult about the common concerns. The country outside the towns was devoted to agriculture, and was covered with farmhouses

[1] Curiously enough no English version of *Utopia* was published in the lifetime of the writer. The earliest in point of time is that which appeared in 1551 under the title of *A fruteful and pleasaunt worke of the best state in a publique weale and of the new yle called Utopia: written in Latine by Syr Thomas More, knyght, and translated into Englyshe by Ralphe Robynson, Citizen and Goldsmythe of London.* Printed by Abraham Vele. A revised edition appeared in 1556, and a third in 1597. All these were in black-letter. Robinson's translation, which, if ofttimes redundant, is still almost always idiomatic and picturesque (recalling in many phrases the Book of Common Prayer of the same date) has been reprinted by T. F. Dibdin, 1808, by Prof. Arber in 1869, also at Morris's Kelmscott Press, 1893, and at the Clarendon Press in 1895. The Latin of More has also been Englished by Bishop Burnet, 1684, by Arthur Cayley in 1808, and others.



for the husbandmen, which were well contrived and furnished with all things necessary for rural labour. Each country family consisted of no fewer than forty men and women and two bondmen, the good-man and his wife ruling every family, and over thirty families being governed by a special magistrate. After staying two years in the country twenty out of each family were sent back to town and their places taken by twenty townspeople, who came to learn the agricultural arts, which by-and-by they would have to teach to others. During the harvest large numbers of additional hands were despatched from the towns, and the harvest was generally got in in a single day. The centre of the means of communication (which were far in advance of those of the sixteenth century) was the chief city of Amaurote, situated upon the River Anyder, some sixty miles above its mouth. This city was encompassed by a high and thick wall, in which there were many towers and forts, and the streets were made very convenient for all carriages and were well sheltered from the wind. The buildings were good and were so uniform that a whole side of a street looked like one house. The inhabitants were lucky in possessing each of them a large garden in connection with their dwellings, and their doors were so happily constructed that they not only easily opened but also shut of their own accord. There was, however, no property among the Utopians; every man entered freely into any house whatsoever; and at ten years' end they shifted their houses by lot.

The great principle on which the life of the Utopians was based is community of goods. There is no private property; no use of money except as a means of communication with other nations and for paying mercenaries. They contemned gold, which was "the reproachful badge of unfamed persons." Meals were taken in common, "four in a mess"; the food, plain but ample, being fetched from



the common market early in the day by special stewards, with a reservation of the very best for hospitals, one for each ward of the city, outside the walls. Bloodshed of every kind was abhorred by the Utopians, and the hunter was classed with, or even below, the slaughterman, both being the occupations of serfs. They trained themselves in martial exercises, but preferred to get the better of their enemies by payments to mercenaries, by corruption, and even by assassination than by open warfare.

Every able-bodied man was compelled by the laws to work for his livelihood. They were careful, the Utopians, not to wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning to night. Dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, they appointed six of these for work. Three hours are so devoted before dinner; after that comes a rest of two hours, and then another short spell of three hours brings them to supper-time. At eight o'clock all go to bed, to rise next morning at four. Lectures, music, and honest games fill up the intervals of the day. Owing to the absence of drones, hoarding, and superfluous expense, the amount of labour proved amply sufficient. All over the island they wear the same sort of clothes. Male and female dress varied but little. Fashions never altered, and every family made their own garments. All, both women and men, learned some trade or other. Generally the same trade passed down from father to son, inclination often following descent; but if any man's genius lay another way, he was by adoption translated into a family that dealt in the trade to which he was inclined. Of the religions in Utopia "there be divers kinds"; but as laws and lawyers were rare, so also have they very few priests. These are men of exceeding holiness, and *therefore* "exceeding few." Like the other magistrates of Utopia, they were selected by ballot. The great feature of More's scheme was religious toleration. By one of the oldest laws



of Utopia it was decreed that no man should be punished for his religion. Every one might be of any religion he pleased, and might use argument to induce others to accept it. This liberty was extended to avowed atheists, though these were judged to be unfit for any public trust. All sects united in public worship, which was so designed that nothing might be seen or heard which should jar with the feelings of any class of worshippers. This broad-minded conception formed a coping-stone to the noble ideal which More had given to the world.

More's conception of the *Utopia* was suggested in part, there is little doubt, by some of his favourite books. Among these we know were Plato's *Republic* and the playful dialogues, especially the *Vera Historia* of Lucian. It seems, further, that More had in his mind the recorded practices of the early Christians and some of the introductory machinery of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. It was the first notable example from the pen of an English writer of the type of *voyage imaginaire*. Its popularity abroad procured it a number of imitators. It suggested such speculative treatises as Campanella's *Civitas Solis*, and it may have had some influence upon such playful flights of fancy as Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyage de la Lune*. It certainly gave a new adjective, *Utopian*, not only to England, but to Europe. English literature itself contains many examples of the *voyage imaginaire*, both of the speculative and of the more purely playful type. Amongst the former may be merely noted Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Harrington's *Oceana*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Sir John Eliot's *Monarchy of Man*, Hall's *Mundus alter et idem*, Filmer's *Patriarcha*, Butler's *Erewhon*, and Bellamy's *Looking Backward;* among the latter Barclay's *Argenis*, Bishop Francis Goodwin's *Man in the Moon*, Bishop John Wilkin's *Discovery of a World in the Moon*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, Raspe's



Baron Munchausen, Lytton's *Coming Race,* and the numerous fantastic peregrinations of Mr. H. G. Wells.

In regard to dramatic invention, More is superior to any of his successors, with the exception of Swift. In the art of feigning he is a worthy disciple of Plato. Like him, starting from a small portion of fact he founds his tale with admirable skill on the few lines in the Latin narrative of the voyages of Amerigo Vespucci. He is very precise about dates and facts, and has the power of making us believe that the narrator of the tale must have been an eye-witness. More greatly regrets that he forgot to ask Raphael Hythlodaye in what part of the world Utopia was situated. When More wrote to his friends at Antwerp to make good the loss of this important detail, the whereabouts of Hythlodaye could no longer be ascertained, and the secret perished with him.[1]

The *Utopia* shows its author to have possessed a reach and originality of thought far beyond his contemporaries. Nearly all that we can learn of More is delightful, but baffling. The favourite of Holbein, of Henry and of Erasmus (who wrote his *Encomium Moriæ* under More's roof), he is described by his "Erasmiotatos" as *omnibus omnium horarum homo.* A merry story ever on his lips, he was never in gayer humour than when he had decided to defy Henry VIII., unless it was when he was actually on the scaffold. Always smiling (like Newman, like Arnold), he keeps his hearers and readers alike under the enigma of his style, and, like his wife, we never quite know when, if ever, he is in earnest; but he wins all hearts, even that of his practical wife, by his playful flattery. Lover of Lucian, patron of Hellenists and musicians, he brings

[1] One of the nearest approaches to the Utopian polity, as pointed out by Sir Clements Markham in his interesting *History of Peru,* was that of Peru under the administration of the Incas.



up a family of scholars with the aid of a birch made of peacocks' feathers. Careless and ironical though he is about worldly prosperities, he constantly eulogises his father's sternness and tenacity in such matters; while, in regard to heretics, he himself was pitiless. The antique mould and the mediæval strain render his character an exceptionally puzzling one for the modern man to unravel.[1]

[1] *The Workes of Sr Thomas More . . . written in the Englysh Tongue*, were edited in folio by Rastell in 1557 (a new edition is promised by Delcourt and O'Connor). His best prose is contained in the unfinished little tract, *De Quatuor Novissimis*, and in the dialogue entitled "Quoth he and Quoth I." The two contemporary Lives of More are by "son Roper," who married his favourite daughter Margaret, first printed in 1616, and the Life in the *Tres Thomæ* (1588) of Thomas Stapleton. The sketches by Mackintosh and Seebohm and the imaginary picture in Anne Manning's *Household of Sir Thomas More* apart, there are two good Lives by Catholics of to-day, Father Bridgett's (best edition 1892) and Henri Brémond's much briefer *Blessed Thomas More* (1904).



BOOK II

DRAMA AND LYRIC

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CHAPTER I

FROM TRANSITION TO TRANSFORMATION—I

"The advancing man discovers how deep a property he has in literature."—EMERSON.

An important period of development—Italian influence—Classical translations—Arthur Golding—Sir Thomas North—Sir Thomas Hoby—Sir Geoffry Fenton—Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*—George Chapman—Edward Fairfax—Joshua Sylvester—John Florio—Thomas Shelton—Sir Thomas Urquhart.

IN dealing with the important period of transition between the early Tudor and later Tudor period, we must pause. We are in a century of two great reigns. The Wars of the Roses are becoming forgotten. Henry VIII. is King.

The Tudor *régime* continues—in the eighties as in the forties the absolute despotism seems undisturbed, nay even strengthened by the repulse of external enemies. But great changes had taken place quietly and imperceptibly. By 1590 the Tudors had achieved their task. Parliament was reviving and was bracing itself up for a task of its own. The force of circumstance which had delivered Englishmen bound into the hands of tyrants was going to release them. The genius of the race demanded it. So in literature, extraordinary developments had taken place in this interval. External signs had been few and of no sensational order. We shall look in vain during the Pro-



tectorates, and during the fifties, sixties, and seventies for any literary planet or for any star of the first magnitude. The literary aptitudes of Englishmen were being undemonstratively schooled and disciplined.

Poetry was acquiring a new quiet force. But it was mainly by forced labours of translation, and by journey work for the infant stage, that the literary train was laid.

The development that took place in regard to English literature between early Tudor and late Tudor times, in the fifty years let us say between 1529 and 1579, was a most important one. The period may at first sight seem empty and singularly barren. But when we regard it attentively and recognise the change brought about in the view taken of fundamentals, we must admit its claim to serious interest. At the commencement of it Sir Thomas More wrote his *Utopia* in Latin. This is a momentous fact.

Much had already been done to unify the English language. Caxton, like another King Alfred, had made translations into English, and having given vernacular books his imprimatur, had distributed them to serve as patterns of the "King's English" broadcast over the land. The same influence had been used to give a wider circulation to the poetry which had hitherto been mainly a monopoly and a luxury of the court—notably the works of Chaucer and Gower; a little later, the popular collections known as the Poetical Miscellanies. Already the Stationers' Company had grown into a powerful federation successfully interested in extending the dissemination of books.[1] Much had assuredly been done, but not enough

[1] In the reign of Mary, the Privy Council began to perceive and to regard with a jealous eye the far-reaching influence which the new art of printing was capable of exercising upon public opinion; the scriveners and book-sellers had formed a guild or craft fraternity in Henry IV.'s time. In Henry VII.'s



apparently for More to think it worth while to clothe the ideas of the future in their native garb of English. Much remained to be done, and the consolidation of English as a uniform literary language suitable for every kind of expression by Englishmen had to be established during there unostentatious years. The foundations had to be laid in translations into a sound, homespun, serviceable prose—religious translation was most effectual.

The result of these combined forces of the organisation of the book industry, the multiplication of translations, and the conversion of English into the medium of the popular religion, was greatly to strengthen the position of the native language. So far had these influences been brought to bear by 1579 that More, if he had been in the act of composing *Utopia* then, would not have dreamed of writing it in Latin. By 1579 England, though still looking abroad for inspiration and design, had definitely begun to aspire to a great literature of her own.

The extent of foreign influence upon English literature

reign, the *Stationers*, as they were called, were reinforced by printers, book-binders, paper-makers, type-founders, and others representing all the trades that took part in the book-producing industry. In May, 1557, the ancient guild was incorporated as a regular company and a charter was granted to it investing its master and wardens with the sole power of printing, with power to search, seize, and destroy any unlicenced or prohibited books and to imprison any person who should print without their authority. No one was allowed to print without the company's licence and all books were to be entered in the register at Stationers' Hall. The fee exacted by the company for licencing a book was at first usually 4*d*., but came in Shakespeare's time to be almost invariably 6*d*. The charter of incorporation was confirmed by Elizabeth in November, 1559, when we gather that there were twenty-two master-printers in London, and the number of printing houses remained fixed at twenty-two until quite down to Commonwealth times. As it was the purists of the day complained



in Elizabeth's day was almost incalculable. Of the various influences that then came in to shape our literature, that of the Italians was unquestionably the greatest. In history, politics, philosophy, science, manners, in travel—but above all, imaginative work of every kind from drama to lyric—Italian books and Italian models were the passion and the rage. From the queen to the humblest courtier the Italian tongue was the test of good breeding. It is doubtful whether any foreign vogue before or since ever took such a complete hold upon English society. It has been computed by Miss Scott, the diligent bibliographer of Elizabethan translations from the Italian, that over four hundred translations from the Italian were made in England during the century (1550—1650), representing over two hundred English translators and rather more Italian authors, the two lists, Italian and English, comprising nearly all the most eminent writers of the day. Shake-

bitterly of the lavish way in which premises were licenced. The number of presses in operation is estimated at between fifty and sixty, and, considering that they were all small hand presses, the number of books, many of them large folios, which they were able to turn out speaks well for the untiring industry of their manipulators. Stereotyping was of course unknown; type was seldom allowed to stand or to be locked up for long; editions were small, rarely exceeding from twelve to fifteen hundred. Not the Privy Council only but also its divisional Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission seem to have exercised a general supervision over the output of the press; but such supervision was of a general and more or less accidental kind. The exact manner in which the censorship was exercised is not very easy to define; nor has the subject ever been worked out with the thoroughness which its intrinsic interest demands. It may be stated, however, in general terms that after 1559 every book, as a necessary condition of publication, had to receive the "allowance" of some recognised authority or other; but the authority varied a good deal. If the book were obviously free from political or theological taint the authority of the master



speare, it is true, did not immediately translate, but his poems are intensely Italianate, and the stories of fourteen of his plays are founded upon Italian fiction, while several other plays contain features which owe their suggestion to Italian sources. Of some seven hundred plays which survive from an output of probably over two thousand during the Elizabethan period, Miss Scott shows that nearly three hundred hark back to Italy for their *motif;* while if imitative plays or plays of remote suggestion were included, the number of "Italianate" dramas would be considerably greater.

The translators who swarmed so thickly had almost the whole field of Latin scholarship open to them. The direct influence exercised by the Greek authors was comparatively remote. The three writers of antiquity whose matter and form exercised most influence upon the Elizabethans were undoubtedly Virgil, Seneca, and Ovid, and after

or wardens of the Stationers' Company might suffice; if it had a doctrinal bearing, however remote, it might be necessary to obtain the licence of the Archbishop or the Bishop of London, or at any rate from the Archbishop's secretary or some well-recognised doctor of divinity, acting possibly as a deputy. In publishing plays it was necessary to affix the imprimatur of the Master of the Revels; the Earl Marshal sanctioned heraldic books; a deputy of the College of Surgeons medical books, and so on. Later on, in the time of the Long Parliament, regular boards were appointed for the licencing of books classified according to subjects. The universities appear to have almost full licencing powers, or powers at least coextensive with those of the bishops; in them too was vested a somewhat ill-defined power of issuing licences for the printing of Bibles and Testaments. In case of a book being issued which had a bearing upon the government, statecraft, home or foreign policy, it would have been considered advisable if not essential to obtain the imprimatur of the Secretary of State; neglect of such a precaution might very well lead to both author and publisher being deprived of their ears. These possibilities notwithstanding, it cannot be justly



these the next most fruitful field was found in Italian authors of comparatively recent date.

Virgil had remained to some extent popular throughout the whole of the Middle Ages; his style had endeared him to the Latin fathers, apart from which it was commonly believed that in his fourth eclogue he had foretold the coming of the Messiah. The task of rendering his beauties into English had already been essayed in various forms by Caxton, Gavin Douglas, and Surrey. In 1555 an Oxford student and barrister of Lincoln's Inn, who was also a physician, named Thomas Phaer, commenced a new translation, completed after his death in 1560 by a fellow-physician called Thomas Twine. Owing to the influence which they exercised over the early English dramatists, the translations from Seneca's plays which were made by Jasper Heywood (1559—1561) were in some respects even more important. The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid was another book which had retained a distinct measure of popularity

said that the censorship of the Elizabethan press was excessively stringent.

A very important feature in the system in many respects far from regular was that there was a large number of patentees who were exempt from the ordinary licencing jurisdiction; so we find that a licence for printing playing cards was issued to one Bowes, the printing of all law books was licenced to Tottle (and if Tottle were lazy, as it was complained he was, the supply of law books had to fall into arrears). Similarly Day had a licence for psalters, Seres for primers, and Roberts for almanacks. The Bishop of London at one time claimed an exclusive right to licence almanacks. The company strongly objected to these monopolies and gradually absorbed them or as many of them as it could. They made large sums out of their privilege to issue Bibles, though this was disputed at various stages by the universities and by the King's printer; but the fact that the privilege was not altogether without its penalties was shown by the circumstance that in 1632 the King's printer was fined £3000 for omitting the "not" from the seventh commandment.



throughout the Middle Ages. These were translated between 1565 and 1567 into a ballad metre full of life and spirit by Arthur Golding, a man of good family, who was connected by marriage with the seventeenth Earl of Oxford and was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney. Golding also translated *The Commentaries of Cæsar* in 1575. The *Metamorphoses* furnished a mine of fable and allusion to Golding's countrymen. Ovid was much read at the time in schools, where it is possible that Golding's translation may not have been unknown. Shakespeare, at any rate, was well acquainted with it, and the frequency of his mythological allusions is largely due to this source. It was to him, in fact, very much what Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* was to Keats. Marlowe, too, is saturated with Ovidian metaphors and images.

Even more directly influential upon the work of Shakespeare than Golding was the great prose stylist among our early translators, Sir Thomas North (1535—1600). North commenced his career as a translator with a version of the Spanish Guevara's *Diall of Princes* (1557). It was not until 1579 that he published his famous translation of Plutarch entitled *The Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans compared together.* North translated directly from the French version of Amyot, but he wrote with a spontaneity and an idiomatic vigour and wit which give his translation many of the characteristics of an original work. Shakespeare's appreciation of North is shown by the close adherence which he paid to the text of the translator in the plays of *Julius Cæsar, Coriolanus,* and *Anthony and Cleopatra;* while *Midsummer Night's Dream, Pericles,* and *Timon of Athens* are all indebted in a less degree to the same source. Another book which exercised a widespread influence in its English form was the *Cortegiano,* or Courtier, of Castiglioni, a mirror of good taste in all that pertained to knightly exercises, literary accomplishments, and elegant love-making, which exercised profound influ-



ence over Northern tastes. *The Courtier,* first printed in the original Italian in 1528, was indeed an epitome of the social ideas of the Renaissance. It serves as a good index of the manner in which the new generation, the *fin de siècle* of the fourteenth century, had transferred their interests from the world to come to the world in being. This was rendered by Sir Thomas Hoby (1530—1566), a Cambridge man who served as English Ambassador in France. His translation, which like most of its fellows was far from literal, was published in 1561. In 1562 Arthur Broke, or Brooke, gave to the world his version of *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet,* from the great Italian novelist who almost rivalled Boccaccio, Matteo Bandello (1480—1561). A few years later, between 1566 and 1567, William Painter constructed a much larger treasure-house of stories drawn both from Boccaccio and Bandello and their imitators, Belleforest and Cinthio, to which he gave the name *The Palace of Pleasure.*

Later in the 'sixties George Turberville followed Golding as a translator of Ovid. In 1566 we have William Adlington's version of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. In 1569 comes a further translation of Ovid and one of the *Æthiopica* of Heliodorus by Thomas Underdown. Sir Geoffry Fenton was simultaneously quarrying in the favourite mine of Belleforest, Boisteau, and Guevara, and glutting the English market with *Tragical Discourses* (1567). One of the monumental translations of the period was by this same Fenton. It was a version of the *History of the Wars of Italy* by Guicciardini—the book which, Macaulay relates, rather than read, the condemned felon went joyfully to the galleys. This bare enumeration may serve to give some idea of the volume of translating work that was being poured out in the early Elizabethan time.

More important perhaps than the translations from ancient classics or from Italian treatises and plays were



the versions of Italian novelists—collections formed by combining together the most sprightly stories which poured from the lips of the Florentine taletellers of the fifteenth century. Many of the Italian stories were excellent of their kind. A good many were based upon ancient sources, but the writers were certainly not lacking in invention. These new Italian stories soon outweighed all other kinds of literary imports, and superseded the native products in popularity; coinciding with the rise of romantic drama in England they soon became the happy hunting ground of playwrights in search of plots. The great storehouse of Elizabethan plots was the collection of stories already alluded to, translated and edited by a Sevenoaks schoolmaster called William Painter (1540—1594), under the title of *The Palace of Pleasure.* The book was projected upon a comparatively small scale in 1562, but the first volume eventually came out in 1566, and a second volume was added in 1567, bringing the number of short stories up to nearly a hundred, mainly from Italian sources. The collection must have come upon the English reading world with something of the freshness that *The Arabian Nights* did 150 years later. The success of the book was very great: reissues of it were soon called for, to which additions were made.[1] Excluding the Bible, it was the biggest book issued between the *Morte d'Arthur* and North's

[1] Among Painter's successors and rivals in the diligent collection of Italian historiettes were: Sir Geoffry Fenton, who gave the world in 1567 his *Certaine Tragicall Discourses*, from the Italian through Belleforest and Pierre Boisteau; George Pettie, who produced in 1576 *A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure;* George Whetstone, who produced in 1582 his *Heptameron of Civill Discourses*, mainly from the *Hecatommithi* of Cinthio; Robert Smyth; George Turberville (*Tragical Tales*); Barnabe Rich (*Farewell to the Militarye Profession*, 1581, exploiting Bandello); Thomas Fortescue (*Forest or Collection of Historyes*, 1571).



Plutarch. Its appearance upon the scene was all the more important because it arrived during the seed-time of the Elizabethan drama between 1565 and 1590. The contact of England with novel conceptions from abroad through the classic revivalists at the universities, through Erasmus, through Luther and the reformers, and through the translators of Boccaccio and Petrarch, had given an enormous stimulus to the intellectual activity of the nation. The English mind had suddenly blossomed out into manhood, ardent and indefatigable; the one thing it wanted was material to work upon. Of the scholastic philosophy and chivalric poetry of the Middle Ages there remained but little, and that little was to a large extent effete. The great intellectual wealth remained to be created, but it could not be created out of nothing. The drama was already indicated in England as the most convenient expression for imaginative capital, for nowhere had the interludes been more popular or better acted than in the English cities. The play, too, would reach many who could not read, or if they could read, had no money for books. Where, then, were the English playwrights to go for their plots? *Gorboduc,* an English tragedy derived from pseudo-classical Seneca, had appeared in 1561, and indicates the source to which English dramatists would have gone for inspiration, but for the rich domain of modern Italian myth which Painter and his fellow-translators were able to naturalise in England. The classic drama with its frigid conventionalities, its well-worn plots, its clumsy machinery, and its banishment of all actions from the stage was by this unlikely means happily prevented from taking a deep root in English soil. An Italian plot soon came to be an almost indispensable passport to English favour (thirty plays are based upon Bandello alone), partly because the public curiosity was aroused to the keenest pitch about everything that concerned Italy,



partly because Italians lent themselves best to romantic treatment. When the classic and romantic schools came into conflict the romantic cause proved the winning one. One might almost say that Italy dominated the Elizabethan drama as much as it did the opera in England between 1750 and 1850.

The finest specimens of verse translations blossomed simultaneously with what was best in Elizabethan poetry and drama during the last few years of Elizabeth's reign. Then were seen the first-fruits of Chapman's ever-memorable *Homer,* Fairfax's *Tasso,* and Sylvester's *Du Bartas.*

George Chapman, "the learned shepherd of fair Hitchin Hill," was born some five years before Shakespeare, and has been claimed as an alumnus by both of our old universities on very insufficient grounds. In scholarship he stands as the rival of Jonson, Donne, and Bacon in the Upper House of letters; and his patrons and friends were the most distinguished that the age afforded. As a poet he made his first appearance at the age of thirty-five, when he produced his dignified and somewhat obscure and laboured *Shadow of Night* (1594). The two Hymns to Night and to Cynthia are written in heroic couplets, the same measure which he subsequently adopted for his *Odyssey.* Chapman was forty when he published the first specimen of his great translation as *Seven Books of the Iliads of Homer, Prince of Poets,* in fourteen-syllabled rhyming couplets. The twenty-four books of the *Iliad* were printed and published by 1611. The twenty-four books of the *Odyssey* followed, and were completed in ten-syllable couplets in 1615. The two qualities in which Chapman's translation excels are primitive strength and an untrammelled vigour in the coining of compounds (cloud-compelling, low-grown tamarisks, triple-feathered helm, mortal-man-made wound, scourge-obeying horse, high-deed-daring man, for instance). Keats's appreciation of Chapman's *Homer* is a



notable testimony to its vitality as a poem; as a scholarly criticism its value, of course, is *nil;* for in exactitude Chapman, who makes no attempt to reproduce the minuter shades of the original, is wholly lacking. The rapid directness of Homer, the plainness and naturalness of his thought, could obviously find no exact counterpart in the inveterate quaintness and lingering fancifulness of an Elizabethan. In those parts of the *Iliad* where the savagery of Homer is most conspicuous, however, Chapman is perhaps at his best, and is certainly unsurpassed by any subsequent rival.

Then gript Æacides his heel, and to the lofty flood
Flung, swinging, his unpitied corse, to see it swim and toss
Upon the rough waves, and said: "Go, feed fat the fish with loss
Of thy left blood, they clean will suck thy green wounds, and this saves
Thy mother tears upon thy bed. Deep Xanthus on his waves
Shall hoise thee bravely to a tomb that in her burly breast
The sea shall open, where great fish may keep thy funeral feast
With thy white fat, and on the waves dance at thy wedding fate,
Clad in black horror, keeping close inaccessible state."

Such poetry as this, rough and unmistakable in its strength, makes it no great exaggeration to say that in Chapman the *Iliad* is best read as an English book, or that the generation which produced Shakespeare knew best how to translate Homer. "Since Amyot in France had, as Montaigne said, made Plutarch himself speak French, endeavours to bring into home fellowship the most famous of the ancients had spread from France to England; but in England, among all such labours, the most arduous and successful was that of George Chapman upon Homer." Chapman completed his work as a translator of Homer by



his version of the *Hymns* and *The Battle of Frogs and Mice* in 1624. He was then sixty-five, and wrote proudly at the end of his volume, "The work is done that I was born to do." Chapman died ten years later, "a poet of most reverent aspect," in 1634. Anticipating the modest vein of Lily-white, Ben Jonson was apt to say that there were only three men who could make a masque: he was one, Chapman an indifferent second, and Fletcher a poor third. But there is much more vitality in Chapman's *Homer* than in any of his other poetic or dramatic work.

Another truly poetic version was the *Godfrey of Bollogne; or, The Recoverie of Hierusalem,* from the Italian of Tasso, which appeared in octave stanza from the pen of Edward Fairfax in 1600. In musical sweetness it far surpassed the previous version (1594) of the Cornish scholar and antiquary, Richard Carew, or the unconventional rendering (also in *ottava rima*) of the *Orlando Furioso,* by Elizabeth's saucy godson, Sir John Harrington. Fairfax owed a good deal to the poetic vocabulary and the scholarly taste of Spenser; but he paid back the loan to his poetical posterity, bequeathing much to delight the nicer spirits of the seventeenth century, such as Crashaw, Milton, Browne, Dryden, and pre-eminently Waller.

Fairfax has great beauties, which have found their most ardent eulogist in old Isaac d'Israeli. If he roughened the music of Tasso a little, he still kept it music, and beautiful music; some of his stanzas, indeed, "give the sweetness of the original with the still softer sweetness of an echo; and he blew into the rest some noble, organ-like notes, which perhaps the original is too deficient in. He can be also quite as stately and solemn in feeling; he is as fervid in his devotion, as earnest and full of ghastly apprehension in his supernatural agency, as wrapt up in leafiness in his sylvan haunts, as luxuriant and alive to tangible shapes in his voluptuousness. He feels the ele-



ments and varieties of his nature, like a true poet; and his translation has consequently this special mark of all true poetry, translated or original—that when the circumstances in the story or description alter, it gives us a proper and pervading sense of the alteration. The surfaces are not all coloured alike as in a bad, monotonous picture. We have no silken armour, as in Pope's eternal enamel; nor iron silks, as in Chapman (who is perhaps the only other various translator, nevertheless); nor an everlasting taste of chip instead of succulence, as in the Ariosto of Harrington." The charming pastoral scene in his version of Tasso (vi. and vii.) in which Erminia in disguise seeks refuge with a shepherd and his sons must have given a special delight to the author of *Cymbeline* and creator of Imogen.

One of the most admired European poems of the Elizabethan era was the *Divine Weeks* of Du Bartas, an enormous epic upon the Creation (Paris, 1578 and 1584) by a very pedestrian Huguenot Milton. Numerous translators sprang up, but the only one to reap the harvest of a complete version was Joshua Sylvester, the son of a Medway clothier, who was educated above his rank, and conceived extravagant ambitions as a poet. He succeeded in developing a remarkable ingenuity as a weaver of quaint metrical patterns; his religious zeal inspired some respect; and he was not content until he had enlisted Prince Henry as a patron. On Prince Henry's death a post was with some difficulty obtained for him as secretary to the merchant adventurers in Middleburg, in Holland, and there he died on December 28th, 1618, at the age of fifty-five. His Du Bartas was begun in 1598 and finished in 1606; the version gained him praise from Drummond, Hall, Drayton, and others, as a "sweet-Sylvestre-nightingale," he was abundantly quoted in the anthologies, and was unquestionably one of the most popular of Jacobean poets.

Together with Spenser, Sylvester formed the chief poet-



ical nutriment of Milton when a boy, and his influence was transmitted through William Browne to other pastoral writers. It is not too much, perhaps, to surmise that from Du Bartas and Sylvester, Milton first conceived the possibilities of the sacred epic; but the influence upon Milton was mainly indirect, and the parallelisms are occasional and accidental rather than studied and deliberate.

As a pendant to this triad of verse translators we may conclude this section with miniatures of three of the most remarkable prose translators,[1] extending our survey from 1599 until the seventeenth century was fairly advanced.

John Florio, son of a Florentine Protestant, was born in London about 1553. He resided in his youth at Oxford, about 1576 was private tutor in foreign languages, and in 1581 matriculated at Magdalen. In 1578 Florio published his *First Fruites,* mainly English and Italian dialogues. The *Second Fruites,* more Italian and English dialogues, with the *Garden of Recreation* annexed, containing "Italian Proverbs," appeared in 1591. His noted Italian and English dictionary, *A Worlde of Wordes,* with which there is every probability that Shakespeare was familiar, was

[1] Of the minor prose translations it is needful only to mention *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius (1566), by William Adlington; *The Æthiopian History* of Heliodorus (1569), by John Underdown; *The Italian History* of Guicciardini (1579), by G. Fenton; the *Histories* of Tacitus (1591), by Sir Henry Savile; Giraldo's *Rudiments of Moral Philosophy,* by L. Bryskett; *Giovi on Emblems* (1585), by Daniel; Machiavelli's *History of Florence* (1595), by Thomas Bedingfield; the *Leucippe and Clitophon* of Achilles Tatius (1597), by William Burton; *The Historie of Philip de Commines* (1601), by Thomas Danett; the Livy (1600), Pliny (1601), Plutarch (1603), Suetonius (1606), and Xenophon (1632), of Philemon Holland, the "translator-general" of the age; *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1586), by S. Rowlands; the *Histories* of Herodotus, by B. R(ich); *Amadis de Gaule* (1595), by Anthony Munday; *The Rogue,* or Life of Guzman d'Alfarache (1613), by James Mabbe.



published in 1598. He enjoyed the patronage successively of the Earls of Leicester, Southampton, and Pembroke, and at the close of the sixteenth century he was living in London on intimate terms with all the chief literary men and their patrons. There is no doubt that through Florio Montaigne spoke to Shakespeare, and probably contributed to convert the cast of his thought into a mould more serious than had yet been habitual to him. Florio's famous translation of Montaigne's *Essays* was licenced to Edward Blount in 1599, but was not published till 1603, in which year Florio became reader in Italian to Queen Anne at a salary of £100 a year, and on August 5th, 1604, was appointed groom of the privy chamber. After 1620 Florio resided at Fulham, where he died of the plague in 1625. There is something of the charm of an original book in the strutting display of Florio's acquired Elizabethan, but he is often far too fantastic to convey the pith of the original.

Thomas Shelton (*fl.* 1612), apparently an Oxford man of an old Norfolk family, seems to have entered the service of Lord Howard de Walden, afterwards Earl of Suffolk. Acquiring a knowledge of Spanish, he translated the first part of *Don Quixote* into English in 1607, the task (it is said) only occupying him forty days. Shelton used a reprint of the original Spanish which was issued at Brussels by Roger Celpius in 1607. On January 19th, 1611-12, at the entreaty of Shelton's friends, it was licenced for publication to Edward Blount under the title of *The Delightful History of the Wittie Knight, Don Quishote.* The book at once achieved the popularity that Cervantes's work has always retained in this country, in which it was the first to appear after the land of its birth. In 1616 the second part of Cervantes's novel was reprinted at Brussels, and an English translation was published by Blount in 1620. No mention of Shelton is made in this volume, but



internal evidence places it to his credit. With the second part was published a new edition of the first, and the two were often bound up together. Shelton acquitted himself like a good paraphraser, and his version is readable enough in strong idiomatic English; but the original often proved too much for him.

Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, eldest son of Thomas Urquhart, was born in 1611. He was admitted at King's College, Aberdeen, in 1622, where he proved himself to be an apt scholar. But before his "brains were ripened for eminent undertakings" he set off on the "grand tour," and travelled through France, Spain, and Italy, acquiring the accent of the several countries with such "liveliness" that he soon passed "for a native." In 1639 after taking up arms with the northern confederates who opposed the "vulgar covenant," Urquhart sailed to London, entered the service of Charles I., and in 1641 was knighted at Whitehall. Before returning to his estate (the financial conditions of which were not of the soundest), in the autumn of the ensuing year Sir Thomas published his three books of *Epigrams*. In 1642 he went abroad again for three years; but his affairs being mismanaged during his absence, from the close of 1645 he took up his abode in the ancestral tower of Cromarty, where, in the very year of his return, he prepared for the press his abstruse work on trigonometry called *Trissotetras*.

On the coronation of Charles II. at Scone, he finally quitted the old castle of Cromarty and joined the Scottish army, but, being taken prisoner at the battle of Worcester, he was lodged in the Tower of London. During the summer of 1651 he was removed to Windsor Castle, and in the next month was released on parole. Urquhart, wishing to convince Cromwell of his value to the country, traced the genealogy of the Urquharts back to Adam, inserting a line in the pedigree (like a street in a directory) with "Here is



the Flood." His next publication was *The Jewel* (vindicating the Scots nation and proposing the adoption of a highly ingenious universal language), which, despite its obvious extravagance, has not only many graphic and humorous touches, but much truth of observation; and in 1653 appeared his admirable translation of the first two books of Rabelais.

After 1653 practically nothing is known of Urquhart; but it is very probable he remained for some years longer in London, continuing his translation of Rabelais, a third book of which appeared after his death. (The version was completed with great adroitness by Peter Anthony Motteux in 1708.) It is stated that Sir Thomas died abroad, from an uncontrollable fit of laughter upon hearing of the Restoration early in 1660.

In an age of "concettists" and "metaphysical" writers, emblematists, and Platonists, not to speak of Muggletonians and literary quakers, Urquhart with his "anti-metathetick commutation of epithets," his "illative ratiocination," his "exclamations in the front and epiphonemas in the rear," could have given points to Cowley himself. Few Englishmen before Sterne could have known the great Valois humorists as well as Urquhart did. His qualities suggest a veritable transfusion of blood from his original Rabelais (who affected craziness as a mask) into the pedantic Scots virtuoso, whose shrine might seem to have been sheer eccentricity. It seems almost a pity that the creator of Baron Bradwardine, of Jonathan Oldbuck, Dominie Sampson, and Dugald Dalgetty, not to mention James I. in *The Fortunes of Nigel,* should never have infused the breath of enduring life into this Ancient Pistoll.

The *Rabelais* is perhaps the most brilliant and the most noteworthy of these three great prose translations, but it can hardly be said that any of them survive, except as

landmarks, in the history of English prose: they have all been superseded.[1] The ornament in all these versions is extremely fine; they are adorned with a fancifulness which is thoroughly Elizabethan in form and colour, but the first object of a translation they do not succeed in compassing. They paraphrase with an emphasis and a brilliancy that is derived, not from their author, but from their own inner consciousness, and consequently transform more than they translate.

[1] Florio by the vigorous and spirited version of Charles Cotton; Shelton by Ormsby and Watt; and Urquhart by W. F. Smith (2 vols., 1893). Among the minor translators of early Elizabethan time ought perhaps to be included the great Eliza herself. She produced some renderings from Boethius, Sallust, Plutarch, and Horace. Her letters, whether in French or English, certainly illustrate the vigour of her mind, but as a prose stylist the most that can be said in extenuation is that her translations were done rapidly, and with no idea of future publication. Creighton accepts as genuine the impromptu lines made to foil her inquisitors when her life was in danger under Mary, and a direct denial of transubstantiation might have been fatal:

> "Christ was the word that spake it,
> He took the bread and brake it,
> And what His words did make it,
> That I believe, and take it."

She was emphatically a learned lady in a period of unrivalled feminine accomplishment; spoke Italian perfectly, Latin easily, Greek moderately, turned out prose and verse indifferently well, and regarded the professional tribe of authors with a cool glance of contemptuous disapproval.

CHAPTER II

FROM TRANSITION TO TRANSFORMATION—II

"Songs and Sonnets, wherein oft they hit
On many dainty passages of wit."

Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset—*The Mirror for Magistrates*—George Gascoigne—*The Steele Glass*—Thomas Churchyard—George Whetstone—George Turberville—*Tottel's Miscellany*—*The Paradise of Dainty Devices*—Some later Miscellanies.

BETWEEN the death of Surrey and the appearance of *The Shepheards Calender* in 1579, when English poetry, like a tropical forest in a south wind, begins to "rustle with growth," the field of verse is occupied by two notorious conglomerates, *The Mirror for Magistrates* and *Tottel's Miscellany*. Both of these works owed their origin (like the *Lives of the Poets* and *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*) to the enterprise of "stationers"—the booksellers of Pope's day, the publishers of our own.

The Mirror for Magistrates was a bookseller's plan for a rhyming sequel to Lydgate's dull but popular *Fall of Princes*. Its main purpose was didactic; moralising such incidents of English history as illustrate the fall from high estate, the humiliation of the strong, and the fickleness of Fortune. The same theme had appealed both to Chaucer and to Gower, and the original model was the *De Casibus Illustrium Virorum* of Boccaccio. On its appearance in 1559 nineteen historical tragedies were narrated by six poets: Baldwin, Ferrers, Cavill, Chaloner, Phaer, and Skelton. The sources from which these poets derived their materials were mainly the chronicles of Hall and Fabyan,



and they cover the same ground as several of Shakespeare's historical tragedies, as well as of Marlowe's *Edward II.* In 1563 the collection was reprinted with an addition of eight legends by, among others, Dolman, Churchyard, and Sackville. Sackville contributed not only a legend, but also an allegorical *Induction,* and, both as regards conception and artistic skill, his work far surpasses that of the other contributors.

Thomas Sackville, who became Baron Buckhurst and eventually first Earl of Dorset, was born in Sussex in 1536. He is said to have graduated at Cambridge; he appears to have studied at Hart Hall, Oxford, and at the Inner Temple; he travelled and sat in Parliament; it was primarily, no doubt, his remote kinship with Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, that procured his elevation to the peerage. He was, however, a cultivated, sagacious, and highly presentable man, and was frequently selected for ceremonial duties. About 1571 he joined the Privy Council, and in 1586 he was selected for the painful duty of communicating the death sentence to Mary Queen of Scots. He was severely rated by Elizabeth in 1587 for having "spilled" her case in the Netherlands, and was directed to confine himself to his house. So well were the nobles of this queen trained in submission that Buckhurst not only kept to his house, but refused to see his wife and children during his nine months' disgrace—so acute was his fear of giving umbrage to his royal mistress. He reaped his reward in 1599, when he was made Lord Treasurer of England, an office which he preserved under James I., and retained until his death in April, 1608. He was then Earl of Dorset. His father was the Sir Richard Sackville who suggested to Ascham the task of writing *The Schole-master;* he made such a pile of money that Naunton with unusual sprightliness said that he ought to be called Fill-sack, not Sackville.



Thomas Sackville had a share, and that no unimportant one, in a work which was in many respects more epoch-making than *The Mirror for Magistrates*—namely, in the first English tragedy, *Gorboduc;* but for the present we must return to Sackville's part in *The Mirror.* Sackville commences his powerful *Induction* with a sombre description of winter. He may have derived the scene from Gavin Douglas, but if he adopts he improves upon it, as he does likewise upon that poet's device of associating the phenomena of Nature with the mournful events which he has to narrate, and with the mood in which he approaches them. Amidst the chill and gloom of winter he meets Sorrow, a woe-begone woman clad in black, whose home is among the Furies of the Infernal Lake. Like the Sibyl in the sixth book of Virgil, she takes the poet down to Avernus. At the porch of Hell they encounter a number of allegorical figures: Remorse, Dread, Revenge, Misery, Care, Sleep, Old Age, Malady, Famine, and others. When these abstractions have been passed, the poet and his guide are ferried across the Acheron and come to the region of departed spirits. At the cry of Sorrow the rout of unhappy shades gather about them, among them Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, wringing his hands

> **With ghastly looks as one in manner born,**
> **Oft spread his arms, stretch'd hands he joins as fast**
> **With rueful cheer, and vapour'd eyes upcast.**

And so he makes his poetic *Complaint* which brings the collection of rhyming tragedies to a close. Harmonious and finely felt though it is, *The Complaint of Henry Duke of Buckingham* does not attain quite to the poetic level of the *Induction,* in which some of the allegorical figures are described with a graphic vigour worthy of Dunbar, with the advantage that harmonious language must ever have over dialect, however strong and homely. It is almost



certain that Spenser owed much of his colour and imagery to Sackville. In vivid portrayal of the vices or the terrible attributes of humanity, it would be hard for a Spenser, a Dürer, or a Watts to surpass such concentrated limnings of Old Age and Malady as the following. The poet, as will be seen, uses the old seven-line stanza of Chaucer:—

Crookbacked he was, tooth-shaken, and blear-eyed,
Went on three feet, and sometimes crept on four,
With old lame bones that rattled by his side,
His scalp all pill'd, and he with eld forelore;
His wither'd fist still knocking at Death's door,
Fumbling, and drivelling, as he draws his breath;
For brief, the shape and messenger of Death.

And fast by him pale Malady was plac'd,
Sore sick in bed, her colour all foregone,
Bereft of stomach, savour, and of taste,
Ne could she brook no meat, but broths alone:
Her breath corrupt, her keepers every one
Abhorring her, her sickness past recure,
Detesting physick and all physick's cure.

George Gascoigne (1525—1577) serves as a link between the early Tudor group and the second or great Elizabethan generation. After the singing birds at the end of the reign had raised their voices, he soon came to be spoken of as merely endurable, and it is doubtful if there are many to-day who could endure to read much of him. Yet after Sackville he was perhaps the most distinguished of the pioneers of poetry in the age that preceded that of Spenser. Of a Bedfordshire family, he was a descendant of the great Chief Justice, Sir William Gascoigne. He entered Gray's Inn, and seems to have been rather wild in his youth; nor did a succession of love affairs, debts, and travels combine to settle him. But he extricated himself by his wit from the reproach of being a mere wastrel, wrote sonnets and



plays, and about 1567 married a well-to-do widow. His wife Elizabeth was the mother, by her first husband, of the charming warbler Nicholas Breton. In 1572 this "common rhymer" skilled to get himself elected M. P. for Midhurst, but his creditors and others managed to prevent him taking his seat, and Gascoigne took service under the Prince of Orange. He fought, like Churchyard, in the trenches at Goes, Flushing, Middleburg, and elsewhere. He went with a passport from William to The Hague (and was perhaps the first to describe that place as "the pleasantest village in Europe"), but the English auxiliaries were regarded with some suspicion by their Dutch allies, and being repelled from the gates of Leyden, which they had gone to relieve, Gascoigne and his comrades fell into the hands of the Spaniards. He was glad to get home to Walthamstow in the forest in 1574.

In Gascoigne's absence a volume of his poems and plays was collected and published without his knowledge or consent under the title *A Hundred Sunday Flowers bound into one Small Posy.* On his return he revised the work carefully, and reissued it as *George Gascoigne's Posie,* the contents of which are divided into three categories: Flowers, Herbs, and Weeds. The book is a notable one from the amount of experimental work which it contains. In the first place are two dramas written in 1556 for production at Gray's Inn: *Jocasta,* a tragedy based upon the *Phœnissæ,* written in conjunction with Francis Kinwelmersh. After *Gorboduc* it is the second play we have written in blank verse, and, like *Gorboduc,* it is a Senecan play; it certainly exhibits a little more action, but it is cumbered with dumb shows and other clumsy machinery, and although nominally derived from Euripides it really is based upon Dolci's version of Seneca's adaptation from the original Greek. The other play, the *Supposes,* avowedly imitated from the *Suppositi* of Ariosto, is interesting



as the first prose comedy we have coming from an Italian source and as anticipating in particulars a portion of the plot structure in *The Taming of the Shrew.* The name Petruchio was directly borrowed from it, while among other indications that Shakespeare was acquainted with this volume is a passage in which the heroine complains of the possibility of her leading apes in hell, very much in the manner of Beatrice. The lyrics interspersed include a charming reminiscence of Skelton, in the compartment of Weeds, called *The Praise of Phillip Sparrowe,* and the volume concludes with a critical essay in prose, the first considerable effort of its kind, styled *Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making of Verse or Rhyme in English,* written at the request of the Italian Donati.

In 1575 Gascoigne took a prominent part in the shows at Kenilworth, devising a couple of masques, and, arrayed as a savage in a fantastic costume of moss and ivy, presenting the Queen with a long poem about fauns and dryads. In April, 1576, he dated from Walthamstow a dedication (to one of his numerous noble patrons) of his blank-verse satire of nearly 1,200 lines entitled *The Steele Glass,* which he commenced in 1562. The figure of a mirror for a title-page was a very hackneyed one; we have already had Skelton's *Speculum Principis,* and the most popular work of the day was *The Mirror for Magistrates,* while later we have *A Looking-Glass for London,* and any number of other variations. By Steel Glass the poet wished to specify one of the old-fashioned steel mirrors, which could not have been apt to flatter, as opposed to the brilliant but specious mirrors of crystal or glass. Like most of Gascoigne's work, it is of relative rather than intrinsic value. After the satires in *terza rima* by Wyatt and Edward Hake's *News out of Paul's Churchyard* it is probably the first of our regular verse satires. In the autumn of 1577 Gascoigne went to Stamford on a visit to his old friend



George Whetstone (who wrote a biographical *Remembraunce* of him in 1577), and he died at Whetstone's house in October. Meres in his survey of the Elizabethan wits ranks Gascoigne very high among the best for comedies and elegies. Webbe, Puttenham, and Harvey likewise praise. He was looked upon as a plentiful rhymer, an inventive wit, and a resourceful translator, yet no pedant, pithy and full of English feeling. These qualities may still be claimed for him, yet his work lacks the form and finish that are needed to confer a lasting vitality. Recognition of his value as a pioneer will not prevent us from acquiescing in the main with Drayton's summary verdict:—

> **Gascoigne and Churchyard, after them again,**
> **In the beginning of Eliza's reign,**
> **Accounted were great meterers many a day**
> **But not inspired with brave fire; had they**
> **Lived but a little longer, they had seen**
> **Their works before them to have burned been.**[1]

Among the smaller poets and satellites, if a luminary of such moderate size as Gascoigne can be presumed to have had any lesser lights, were Thomas Churchyard, George Whetstone, George Turberville, and Barnabe Googe.

Thomas Churchyard (1520-1604), a Shrewsbury man, was a contemporary of Skelton and More, and lived on through hot service in the Low Countries, in France, Lor-

[1] There are two rather indifferent collected editions of Gascoigne's works, one by Abel Geffs in 1587, another by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt in 1869 (2 vols. Roxburgh Library, 4to). The *Notes of Instruction* were reprinted in Haslewood's *Ancient Critical Essays*, 1815, and *The Steele Glass* with Whetstone's *Remembrance* by Professor Arber in 1868. There are careful accounts of him in Cooper's *Athenæ Cantabrigienses*, and in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, but these are superseded by the critical Life and estimate by Professor Schelling, of Philadelphia, 1893. See also F. J. Snell, *The Age of Transition*, 1905.



raine, Scotland, and elsewhere, until the reign of James I. So late as 1604 his *Good Will,* a poem on the death of Archbishop Whitgift, preserved—in a manner that must have seemed strange to the hearers of Herrick and of Donne, and the survivors of Marlowe and Spenser—the lolloping verse, the curious alliteration and the mechanical antitheses of the transitional poets of the court of Henry VIII.; he was, in fact, the old Palæmon of Spenser's *Colin Clout—*

That sang so long until quite hoarse he grew.

George Whetstone (d. 1587), a native of London, was born nearly a quarter of a century after Churchyard, in 1544. He also fought against Spain in the Low Countries, where he met both Churchyard and Gascoigne, whose funereal example he followed in turning to letters for a livelihood. He wrote a large number of poems for the miscellanies, a play based upon one of Cinthio's *Hecatommithi,* and called *Promos and Cassandra;* while in 1582 he brought out his well-known and popular *Heptameron of Civill Discourses,* which was reissued in 1593 as *Aurelia, the Paragon of Pleasure.* Whetstone appears to have fought at Zutphen in 1582, and it may well be that he deserved military renown better than the laurel wreath with which Webbe was ready to credit him.

George Turberville (d. 1610), a descendant of an ancient Dorset family, was born in 1540, and accompanied Thomas Randolph on a mission to Muscovy in 1568. He wrote some metrical epistles from Muscovy, and in 1567—a year, that is, before he set out for Russia—he published his *Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs, and Sonnets.* This was followed by *Tragical Tales,* 1567, mostly out of Boccaccio. He translated the *Egloges* of Mantuan and the *Epistles* of Ovid, both published in his fruitful year, 1567. He used



blank verse in several of his epistles, but he was fonder of the octave measure, which he used without too much heaviness, though he was laughed at as antediluvian by the wits of 1600. Many of his so-called "sonnets" are love lyrics of varying metres.

The first tentative efforts of the Elizabethans are interesting to inquisitive students, but by ordinary readers have been relegated to the "dim and derided limbo of literature where poetasters flutter and twitter (as bats in a cave) like the ghosts of Penelope's suitors in Homer." Fortunately for us these croaking days are succeeded in the late seventies, culminating in 1579, by a joyous season of unexampled fecundity, a vocal chorus of singing-birds who answer each other from every brake and covert. Many exquisite notes and trills must have been lost before a system of registry was developed by means of the poetical miscellany in the second half of the sixteenth century. The following is a list of the seven best known of these anthologies (excluding *The Mirror for Magistrates*) between 1557 and 1602:—

(1) *Tottel's Miscellany,* brought out by the well-known printer, Richard Tottel, under the title *Songes and Sonettes written by the ryght honorable lorde Henry Howard, late Earle of Surrey, and other,* in June, 1557, went through numerous editions, six at least in Elizabeth's reign; it included among its contributors, besides Wyatt and Surrey, Lord Vaux, and Nicholas Grimald. Grimald, an Oxford graduate and son of an Italian-born employé of Empson and Dudley, may have been the original editor. The first edition contained forty pieces by Wyatt, ninety-six by Surrey, forty by Grimald, ninety-five by Vaux, Bryan, Churchyard, and others; in the second edition, of July, 1557, thirty of Grimald's pieces were omitted, but other anonymous pieces were added, making the total up to 280 (in place of 271).



(2) *The Paradyse of Daynty Devices,* published by Henry Disle in 1576; it contained poems which, as in Tottel, were mostly signed, and among the known contributors were Lord Vaux; Francis Kinwelmersh, a friend and collaborator of George Gascoigne; and the two musicians, William Hunnis and Richard Edwardes, Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal; Edwardes was reputed the best fiddler, the best mimic, and the best sonneteer of the age. This miscellany became almost as popular as its predecessor.

(3) *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions,* made by Thomas Proctor, and brought out by Richard James in 1578; the writers in this are indicated by a few initials only.

(4) *The Phœnix Nest,* brought out by John Jackson in 1593. The poems in this, which are mostly anonymous, are edited by R. S., of the Inner Temple. Among the known contributors are Thomas Lodge, Nicholas Breton, George Peele, and Sir Walter Raleigh, and there are many exquisite poems by anonymous writers. Later still in date are:—

(5) *England's Helicon,* published by John Flasket in 1600. This was a delightful collection of pastoral poetry planned by John Bodenham and edited by an anonymous A. B., most of the contributions being fortunately signed. *Helicon* was issued in a revised form in 1614. A better anthology than this did not appear in Britain before *The Golden Treasury.* Among the contributors are Sidney, Spenser, Drayton, Lodge, Greene, Peele, Shakespeare, Breton, and Bamfield.

(6) *England's Parnassus,* brought out by N. Ling and others in 1600, and edited by R. A., is rather a treasury of quotations, the references to which are often wrongly given, than a miscellany proper.

(7) *Davison's Poetical Rhapsody,* published by John Baily in 1602, and edited by Francis, the son of Secretary

Davison. This is exceptionally valuable for the amount of unprinted verse it contains.[1]

[1] In addition to these, there were a number of minor miscellanies, such as Clement Robinson's *Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584), containing the ballad of "Lady Greensleeves" and the wooing song "Maid, will ye love me, yea or no?"; Anthony Munday's *Banquet of Dainty Conceits* (1588); *The Passionate Pilgrim*, absurdly ascribed by a too enterprising publisher to William Shakespeare; *Wit's Commonwealth;* and Bodenham's *Belvedere*. The seven collections named above are, however, perhaps the most important, as they are certainly the most easily referred to, having been reprinted as *Seven English Miscellanies* under the editorship of J. Payne Collier in 1867. The three volumes of Park's *Heliconia*, 1815, contain Nos. 3, 4, and 6 in the list above, in addition to Robinson's *Handful of Delights*. Nos. 5 and 7 have been admirably edited by A. H. Bullen. In addition to the above, A. H. Bullen has collected two delightful volumes of lyrics from the Elizabethan song-books, brought out by such well-known musicans as William Byrd, John Dowland, Thomas Campion, Philip Rosseter, Robert Jones, Thomas Ford, N. Yonge, and the madrigalists Weelkes, Morley, Wilbye, Ravenscroft, and others. William Byrd's three song-books came out respectively in 1588, 1589, and 1611. The three song-books of the excellent lutenist John Dowland appeared similarly in 1597, 1600, and 1603. Thomas Weelkes was organist successively at Winchester and Chichester, and the composer of a rich diversity of Ballets, Madrigals, and Fantastick Airs. The verses in his song-books are never heavy or laboured, but always "bright, cheerful, and arch." Thomas Morley, a pupil of Byrd, is noted as the author of the first systematic *Introduction to Practical Music* (1597) ever printed in England. John Wilbye is generally regarded as the *primus inter pares* of the glorious band of English madrigal writers. "Love me not for comely grace" is one of the exquisite songs to which he gave a worthy musical setting in his "Second Set" of Madrigals (1608-9). Thomas Ravenscroft was a rare collector of "rounds, catches, and canons," given to the world in *Pammelia*, *Deuteromelia*, and *Melismata*. Jones and Rosseter were alike famous as lutenists and teachers, Ford and Yonge as composers and students of foreign music. Yonge was a singing man at Paul's, and a clever collector of strange



madrigals. John Dowland studied in France and Italy before taking his Mus. Bac. at Oxford in 1588. He was a wonderful lutenist, and was eagerly welcomed at the Danish court in 1600, but he appeals to us most as a connoisseur of song. William Byrd (1539-1623), another Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, who ranks with Tallis in the van of old English music, made his reputation as Organist at Lincoln. His taste was rather Puritan, and he shows an undue fondness for square-toed psalmody, yet he also set some delightful pastoral songs. The volume of all this collected verse is enormous, not to speak of the dainty verselets "in private chambers that encloistered are." To the lover of word-music these composers are a race apart, inasmuch as they were not content to regard the words of a song as a "mere peg on which to hang the music, but sought the services of true-born lyrists." And it is "not too much to say that, for delicate perfection of form" some of these obscure librettists come within measurable distance of the choicest epigrams in the Greek Anthology. For the musical side of the subject the student should consult the Fourth and Fifth Chapters of Henry Davey's extremely interesting *History of English Music*. The contents of the best of the song-books, with comments on the more notable songs, are given in *Shorter English Poems* (*An English Garner*, 1903). There, too, will be found a copious collection of sixteenth and seventeenth-century *Posies for Rings, Handkerchers and Gloves* (1624). "Taken a few at a time," says Mr. Bullen, "these suckets have a pleasant relish."



CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND LETTERS FROM THE AGE OF CHAUCER DOWN TO 1611

"Wyclif, Langland, and Chaucer are the three great figures of English literature in the Middle Ages."—JUSSERAND.

John Wyclif—*Piers Plowman*—William Langland—William Tyndale—John Foxe—The English Prayer Book—The Metrical Psalms—The Authorised Version of the Bible.

THE text we have put at the head of this chapter is one that strikes home with the vigour of what seems almost a familiar truth. Langland, who taught the people by poetic allegory in an old alliterative verse which takes us back to the days before the speech of the people was disdained as vile, and forms a kind of bridge between Anglo-Saxon and English; Chaucer, who naturalised Italian story and French verse in the new "mother-tongue," as Midland English began to be called from about the time of the Black Death; Wyclif, who formed the conception of a popular Bible in the vulgar tongue or English of the commonalty. These three sum up what is of most pith and moment to the twentieth century in what remained of the Middle Ages to England in 1475.

John Wyclif belonged to the rich and respectable family of the Wyclifs, lords of the manor of that name in the Richmond district of Yorkshire. He was born from ten to twenty years before Langland and Chaucer, somewhere about 1322. He studied at Oxford, probably at Balliol, and soon attracted notice, being one of those men who occupy from the beginning of their lives without seeking for it, but being, as it were, born to it, a place apart and aloof from the limp multitude of men. When he was



barely thirty-five the College of Balliol, which had lost its master, elected him to fill the post, which he seems to have held for a brief space only. In 1372, after sixteen years' study, he became a doctor of divinity. He was already famous as a writer and logician, and was preparing to qualify for the title of ecclesiastical politician.

Advancing upon the familiar lines of those who said that the action of the Pope must be restrained and controlled by General Councils, Wyclif soon outstripped all his predecessors in daring as a theorist. He was not satisfied, in fact, until he had destroyed the papal theory altogether, and by so doing acted as pioneer of that Protestant sap of the organisation of Christianity as a Church which has gone on more or less steadily ever since. Wyclif was charged in papal bulls ordering his arrest with no less than nineteen notorious heresies, and was tried at Lambeth early in 1378. But with the court and baronial backing at his command, the prelates manifestly dared not condemn him to any severe penalty. He was merely adjured not to disseminate his errors, and naturally paid no attention whatever to the adjuration.

But there was another side to Wyclif's activity, not theological or theoretical at all, but evangelical. He was the pioneer of the university extension movement, for it was the main object of his care in his later life that the plain outlines of the gospel story should be disseminated among the poor by college men in the guise of itinerant preachers.

Lollardism and Methodism, too, as well as the so-called "Oxford Movement," began at Oxford. By the "poor preachers" the authority of the Bible was to be exalted against that of the Bishop of Rome. There was no printing press then, we must remember, and reading was still an accomplishment. About 1380, or possibly a little before, he began to arrange for the version of the Bible from the



Latin which goes by his name, and which he undoubtedly inspired, though the bulk of the actual translating was done by his Oxford disciples. His final stage as an insurgent against Church authority was reached when, in his antagonism to sacerdotal miracle-mongering, he questioned the miracle of the mass, and declared (though somewhat ambiguously) that he recognised in the sacrament only an emblem of remembrance and communion. In the eyes of opponents he had now quitted "error" for black heresy, which was promptly condemned by the assembled D.D.'s at Oxford in 1381. The political situation alone could now have saved Wyclif, as it subsequently saved Luther. As it was, the great peasants' revolt of this year was followed by a steadily accelerating movement of ecclesiastical reaction. But Wyclif himself was left unmolested, and retired to the peaceful parsonage of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire (where his pulpit may yet be seen): there he occupied himself with preaching to his rural congregations the sermons which have come down to us, in completing some portion of his translation of the Bible, and in composing treatises of enhanced violence against the abuses of the Church and the scandals of the pontificate, until his death on the last day of 1384. He was buried at Lutterworth.

Since the beginning of his academic course Wyclif had been deeply absorbed in the study and exposition of the Scriptures. His controversial tracts were varied by strenuous Bible sermons. The Oxford students listened with rapt attention to the life-giving words of his preaching, and soon, in accordance with the scholastic habits of the day, they styled him "Doctor Evangelicus." It was then that the idea first dawned in his mind of transferring the dead letter of the Latin version into the recently developed speech of his mother-land. This great work, which seems to have occupied him mainly about 1379-80, was of neces-



sity based upon the Vulgate or Latin Bible, for Wyclif did not understand the original Hebrew or Greek. Part of the Bible had already been done into Anglo-Saxon and into English, especially the great treasure-house of mediæval devotion, the Psalms, and the whole Bible had been done into court French, which had but recently ceased to be the common language of the law courts and of the upper classes. As part of his great appeal to Scripture against the mediæval Church, it was Wyclif's earnest desire that the Scriptures in the living tongue should reach the people through the medium of the poor priests which he had instituted a few years previously. Wyclif himself seems to have inspired and supervised the translating of the whole Bible into the vulgar tongue. He himself was responsible probably only for quite a small portion of the New Testament. But a great emulation seems to have prevailed among his disciples in regard to the carrying on of the work by which their master set so much store. Nicholas Hereford rendered most of the Old Testament, and the whole was revised after Wyclif's death by his former curate at Lutterworth, John Purvey. Purvey's version of 1388-9 is less stiff and awkward, yet at the same time is freer from colloquialisms and from Midland provincialisms than the original. In spite of the subsequent persecution of the Lollards, as many as a hundred and seventy manuscript copies of Wyclif's version are extant to this day, affording a faint hint of the impression which must have been produced by the first appearance of the translation. Its wide diffusion was in fact the first irreparable breach in the fortress round which the clergy had reared the Vulgate as an impregnable bulwark. Wyclif's Bible was extensively copied down to about 1450, and even amid the violence of orthodox reaction during the fifteenth century the Bible penetrated so deeply into the hearts of the people that the knowledge of it could not again be wholly



eradicated. "It is certain that the Reformation had virtually broken out in the secret Bible readings of the Cambridge reformers before either the trumpet call of Luther or the exigencies of Henry VIII.'s personal and political position set men free once more to talk openly against the Pope and the monks and to teach a simpler and more spiritual gospel than the system against which Wyclif had striven."

Contemporary with Wyclif, or even before him in point of time, we have the strange and mystical book of *Piers Plowman*. Along with Wyclif's sermons and Chaucer's tales it aids us in forming a large yet accurate conception of the social life of the time. It is, however, neither an exhortation nor a humorous reflection, but a calm allegorical exposition of the corruptions of the State, of the Church, and of social life, revealing to the people the true causes of the evil under which they were suffering. The author is a stern reformer, influenced to some extent no doubt by Wyclif in his later work. Without the inward power of religion outer observances are to him but hollow shows, mockeries, hypocrisies. He is a severe judge of those dignitaries whom he takes to be blind guides and betrayers of their trust. Amidst the wealth and corruption of the world, the poet, whose moral feeling is intense and all-absorbing, looks to poverty as the best of purifiers. Like Chaucer, he looks for charity and unselfishness in the Plowman, and he almost adores the industrious, the down-trodden, rustic poverty of the humble and lowly.

Such opinions were wrapped by the poet in a prudent allegory, but they reached the ear and the heart of the people. During the whole of the fifteenth century it is probable that the rhythm of Long Wille passed current among the rural population of Central England, especially among followers of Wyclif. The author who thus describes himself as Long Wille is believed to have been William



Langland, or Langley, a Shropshire man who was born at Cleobury Mortimer about 1332. His father and friends put him to school possibly in the monastery at Great Malvern, made a clerk or scholar of him, and taught him what holy writ meant. In 1362 he wrote the first draft of his poem, which he apparently began to compose in the month of May, while wandering on the Malvern Hills. Soon afterwards he went to live in Cornhill, with his wife Kitte, and his daughter Calote, for many long years. In 1377 he began to expand and modify his poem, in which he now alludes to the accession of Richard II. Fifteen years later, he wrote another and final draft of it. The poems were very popular, but the poet sought no patron, and remained exceeding poor, earning a precarious living by singing penitential psalms and hymns for the good of men's souls, and possibly by acting as a scrivener, and transcribing legal documents. He was probably a clerk in minor orders, and his time was spent between London and the West; the last we hear of him is at Bristol. We have no trace of him after 1399.

His poem was not written in rhyme, but, with certain differences, in the old Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre, and in the West Midland dialect. No less than fifty MSS. of the three various drafts exist, but the poem was not printed until 1550.

A translation of the English of Edward III. is almost essential to an Englishman under Edward VII.[1] A lover

[1] There are two excellent ones: (1) A rhythmical version preserving the old alliterative measure, itself a modification of the Anglo-Saxon measure, by Prof. Skeat (*The King's Classics*), 1905. (2) A modern prose version by Kate M. Warren, 1899. There is a delightful book on *Piers Plowman* * (1894), by J. J. Jusserand, and a more recent study (1900) by Mensendieck. For social conditions reflected in the poem, see G. M. Trevelyan's *England in the Age of Wycliffe* (1899, and a new edition 1904). About 1394, when the Book of *Piers Plowman* was



guides Guillaume de Lorris through the paths of the Garden of the Rose, Virgil led Dante through the Inferno; the English visionary is led by Piers Plowman—the real hero of the work. Bent over the soil, patient as the oxen that he goads, he performs each day his sacred tasks, the years pass over his whitening head, and from the dawn of life to its twilight he follows ceaselessly the same endless furrow, pursuing behind the plough his eternal pilgrimage. Around him the idle sleep, the careless sing. Piers shall feed them all except the useless ones. There must be no unfairness to classes, but social endeavour must be the touchstone of each class alike. Every class that is content to perform its duties imperfectly, and without sincerity, without passion, without pleasure, without striving to attain the best possible results and do better than the preceding generation, will perish. So much more surely shall perish the class that fails to justify its privileges by its services. Langland let loose upon the indolent, the careless, the busybodies who talk much and work little, a terrible foe—Hunger. "Then Hunger seized Waster quickly by the Maw," but Piers intervened. "Let him live with the hogs," he prayed.

Piers Plowman soon became a sign and a symbol—a personification of the labouring class, of the honest and courageous workman. John Ball invoked his authority in his letter to the rebel peasants of 1381. His credit was made use of by the reformers and a remedy claimed for

at the height of its popularity, this popularity was taken advantage of by an unknown writer, who produced a sharp satire against the friars, less mystical and less charitable than Langland's poem, though written in the same metre, to which was given the name *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, a short poem of 850 lines. For Wyclif see *Dictionary of National Biography*, and H. B. Workman, *Dawn of the Reformation*, 1901; see also Morris and Skeat, *Specimens of Early English*, part ii. (1298—1393).



abuses in his name. The vehement and passionate England that produced the great rising of 1381, the heresy of Wyclif, and later the Puritan revolution of 1642, all these latent possibilities are indicated by the rumblings of Piers Plowman.

William Tyndale was born on the borders of Wales, probably about 1485. He was apparently brought up in Gloucestershire, a stronghold of the Church, where religious abuses are said to have flourished with some vigour. In 1510 he was entered at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and is related to have improved himself in tongues, in which he excelled, and in theology. After taking his degree there in 1515, he proceeded to Cambridge, where the fame of Erasmus was still fresh in men's minds. There we know that he read with delight that wonderful satire, that *encomium moriæ* in which Erasmus smothered with ridicule the defenders of the old traditional ignorance. "I totally dissent," says Erasmus in another work, "from those who are unwilling that the sacred Scriptures translated into the vulgar tongue should be read by private individuals. The mysteries of kings it were perhaps better to conceal, but Christ wishes His mysteries to be published as widely as possible. I would wish even all women to read the gospel, and St. Paul's Epistles, and I wish they were translated into all languages of all people, that they might be read and known, not merely by the Scotch and Irish, but even by the Turks and Saracens. I wish that the husbandman would sing parts of them at his plough, that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveller may with their narratives beguile the weariness of the way."

When in 1522 Tyndale, convinced already of the special antidote which the obscurantism of the Church needed, avowed his intention of turning the Word of God into English, it was in terms which were the very echo of these noble words of Erasmus. With this idea of translation in



his mind, he sought the patronage of a distinguished scholar, Bishop Tunstall, in the summer of 1523. But Tunstall was a typical bishop in his timidity with regard to dissent, and Tyndale soon found that it would be impossible for him to accomplish his translation in England. A few sympathisers supplied him with money, and, with his amanuensis, William Roy, he proceeded through Hamburg and Wittenburg, where he paid a long visit to Luther, to Cologne, and there began printing his version of the New Testament. A prominent Catholic got wind of the enterprise, and procured an order from the senate of Cologne interdicting the printers from proceeding with the work. Tyndale and Roy managed to escape to Worms with the sheets in October, 1525, and the work was soon set up again, and printed by Schoeffer, not in quarto, as originally designed, but in octavo. Copies were smuggled over to England early in 1526. But the king and bishops had been warned of the threatened danger, and the importation of the copies was strictly prohibited. Tunstall himself felt bound to preach against it; by such means the circulation was greatly stimulated. Two copies of the octavo of 1525 and one of the original Cologne quarto are still extant, the latter in a fragmentary condition in the Grenville collection at the British Museum. Apart from its merit as a model of English vernacular style, Tyndale's New Testament is a sound piece of English translation, not, as the learned Hallam erroneously states, taken from the German of Luther and the Latin of the Vulgate, but based primarily upon Erasmus's third edition of the Greek text. Even Sir Thomas More admits that Tyndale "before he fell into his Lutheran frenzies was full prettily learned." "Of the translation itself," says Froude, "though since that time it has been many times revised and altered, we may say that it is substantially the Bible with which we are all familiar. The peculiar genius, if such a word may



be permitted, which breathes through it, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the preternatural grandeur, unequalled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars, all bear the impress of the mind of one man, William Tyndale."

Shortly after the completion of the New Testament, Tyndale took refuge in Marburg, and was soon converted to a type of Protestant theology much more advanced than that which he had imbibed from Luther at Wittenburg. Rejecting not only Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation, but also Calvin's theory of a spiritual presence in the Sacrament, he followed the Swiss reformer Zwingli in regarding the Lord's Supper merely as a commemorative rite. In October, 1528, he issued his most important original work, *The Obedience of a Christian Man,* printed by Hans Luft at Marburg; it insists upon the supremacy of the civil power and the paramount authority of Scripture in matters of doctrine. Unfortunately, Tyndale undid the good impression which this produced upon Henry by an unsparing denunciation of the divorce proceedings in a work of some pith called *The Practyse of Prelates* (1530). It is grievous to find two such men as Tyndale and Sir Thomas More engaged during these years in a literary controversy which degenerated into an interchange of the most scurrilous personalities. More defended the practice and paramount authority of the Church with the skill of an accomplished logician. Tyndale replied in a sharp and satirical *Answere* (1531), appealing to Scripture with an ultimate resort to individual judgment. No controversial issue could possibly be reached from such divergent premises; in the meantime Tyndale, first at Hamburg and then at Antwerp, was proceeding steadily with his translation of the Pentateuch, which was issued at Marburg by Hans Luft, January, 1530, 8vo. The only perfect copy of this edition is in the British Museum, as is also a copy of his unique version of Jonah, Antwerp, 1531. His trans-

lation of Joshua, Kings, and Chronicles was not printed separately, but was left in MS. and incorporated in Matthew's Bible. This was done through the agency of John Rogers, the first martyr of the Marian persecution who came out to Antwerp as English chaplain, and was converted by Tyndale. From the end of 1531, Tyndale's position in Antwerp had been a very precarious one. Not only had Henry VIII. demanded his surrender from the Emperor on a charge of spreading sedition in England, but several priests and ecclesiastical embassies were plotting against him. As long as he remained in the English merchant's house under the protection of a sympathiser named Thomas Poyntz, Tyndale was comparatively secure. Unhappily in May, 1535, he was decoyed from this refuge by a fanatical papist, betrayed to the Emperor's agents, and imprisoned in the Belgian Bastile, the castle of Vilvorde. Great efforts were made to procure his liberation; nevertheless, in the early summer of 1536 he was brought to trial for heresy, condemned, degraded, and sentenced to death. On October 6th he was bound by an iron chain to a stake, surrounded by faggots, strangled, and then burnt.

No one had dared to print Wyclif's Bible—the knowledge of which was consequently much restricted. Tyndale, no doubt, used it, and also its original, the Vulgate; but on the whole his translation is an independent one, based upon the Hebrew and Greek texts. More important still is the originality of his language and his happy collocation of phrases. His achievement fixed the type in accordance with which later labourers worked. His influence decided that our Bible should be popular rather than literary in its appeal. He felt by a happy instinct the potential affinity between Hebrew and English idioms, and enriched our language and thought for ever with the characteristics of the Semitic mind. The labours of the next seventy-five years were devoted to improving his work in detail.

His Bible had been prohibited in England, though large



numbers of ill-printed copies were steadily imported from Antwerp, and meanwhile a decree had been passed by Convocation to the effect that the Bible should be printed in the vulgar tongue (1533). As the outcome of this, the first complete English Bible, a translation from the German and Latin, with aid from Tyndale's English, was issued in October, 1535. This did not prove wholly satisfactory, and in 1537 another version made up of Tyndale and Coverdale was published by the King's "lycense." This was known as Matthew's Bible. And here we must interrupt for a brief space our story of the English Bible.

John Foxe (1516-1587) was born at Boston, in Lincolnshire, and was educated at Magdalen College School, subsequently becoming a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford; but he retired from his Fellowship in 1545 as, being already a fervent Protestant, he objected both to the enforcement of celibacy and to the obligation of taking Holy Orders. In 1547 he married a lady who, like himself, was then in the household of the Lucys of Warwickshire, and soon after this he was appointed to be tutor to the sons of the unfortunate Earl of Surrey. During this period he read largely in Church history, with a view to an elaborate defence of the Protestant position. In 1550 he was ordained deacon by Bishop Ridley, but on the accession of Mary he fled to Strasburg, where he printed in Latin the earliest draft of a fragment of his great Martyrology. A little later, at Frankfort, he became an adherent of John Knox, and later we find him at Basle, reduced to his last penny, and full of gratitude to Grindal for a gift of two crowns. Then his fortunes mended slightly, and he became a reader for the press of a Protestant printer, Johannes Oporinus; yet he seems to have had a considerable amount of time for his own studies, and when the accounts of the terrible burning of Protestants reached him he set to work immediately upon a narrative of the



Marian persecutions. In the autumn of 1559 he returned to England, where he was now ordained priest. In 1563, from the press of his friend John Day, he published his great work with a title borrowed from the *Actiones et Monimenta Martyrum,* printed at Geneva some two or three years previously. The success of the undertaking was immediate (four editions of the *Actes and Monuments* appeared during his lifetime), and through Bishop Jewel Foxe received a prebend in Salisbury Cathedral as a reward. But Foxe still remained poor; vainly he communicated to Elizabeth in very complimentary terms his intention of writing her Life. When she was excommunicated in 1570, he preached a strong anti-Catholic sermon at St. Paul's Cross. He next wrote a treatise on the legal settlement of the Church of England, and edited for Archbishop Parker an Anglo-Saxon text of the Gospel. In 1572 he showed his fidelity to his old patron by attending the Duke of Norfolk on the scaffold, and three years later he showed more courage in protesting against the burning of two Dutch Anabaptists. His obstinate refusal to adopt the surplice effectually prevented his promotion in the Church; but he lived on till April, 1587, when he was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate, where his monument may still be seen. Though extremely devout, and ill-provided with worldly goods, he seems to have been merry, sanguine in disposition, and kind-hearted and charitable to the poor. Though grave and bearded, he had more benevolence in his look than seems habitual to the grim Protestant divines of that age. In his dress he is said to have been shabby and even slovenly.

In its enlarged form of 1570 Foxe's work contains more than twice as much matter as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall.* When it is remembered that he wrote the book in exile with the scantiest facilities for reference to works of learning, the reader is impressed not only by the amazing



industry, but also, and scarcely less, by the historical respectability of the work. Foxe did not belong to the class of philosophical historians. He did not try to hold the balance between contending sides. He was an out-and-out Protestant, and he wrote his book in a polemical spirit and for a polemical purpose. It was intended as an attack upon the Popish system, the errors and intolerant spirit of which he felt it his bounden duty to expose. Hence, especially in his marginal notes, he uses expressions such as modern taste would object to.

Yet, after the Bible, it is probable that Foxe's *Martyrs* moulded English Protestantism more than any single book. The first three Archbishops, Parker, Grindal, and Whitgift, cordially approved it, and Convocation ordered it to be set up in the parish churches and halls of the universities. Its influence in keeping alive Protestant feeling in Britain and North America is too well known to be disputed. It has passed through the ordeal of innumerable abridgments; it may still be seen, as Macaulay saw it, chained to the reading desk in the village church. Its lurid drawings of racks and faggots have given nightmares to generation upon generation of Protestant children.

The process of evolution to which we owe the English Book of Common Prayer was more rapid than that by which our Authorised Version of the Bible gradually assumed its final form. The originality of the forms of worship which go to inspire the English liturgy is not much greater than that of the subject-matter of our Bible. The outlines of the service are an inheritance which has come down to us from the remote ages of Christianity. During the Middle Ages a complicated system of ritual books had come into existence, and it was to the abbreviation and careful editing of these rather than to the origination of any novelties that reformers such as



Cranmer very wisely and properly applied themselves. A number of primers containing the most familiar portions of the service, such as the Lord's Prayer, Creed, Litany, and Ten Commandments in the vernacular, were handed down from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The versions which they gave of the old Latin prayers formed a nucleus upon which the revisers of church books would most naturally work when they began to draw up a scheme for a liturgy in the vulgar tongue in 1542. The Sarum Breviary, which was still in use all over the south of England, was the principal model. The names of the popes and Thomas à Becket were scrupulously erased, the Litany was carefully revised by Cranmer, and the desire to make the public service of the church congregational generally avowed. Various experiments continued to be made, primarily in the Chapel Royal; the Litany, the Epistle and Gospel, and the service of Compline were given in English in the churches. An English order of Communion was further, in the first year of Edward VI., grafted upon the Latin office of the mass, restoring Communion in both kinds to the laity. But this step was merely preparatory to the publication of a complete book, upon the settling of the order of which Cranmer, with Ridley, Goodrich, Redman, and others were engaged at Chertsey in September, 1548.[1] The guiding principles of the revisers were fairly interpreted in the answer given to the Devonshire rebels, who objected to the new service, namely that it was no new service, but "the

[1] Of the Book of Common Prayer, Thomas Cranmer (born at Aslacton on July 2nd, 1489), "first Protestant Archbishop of this kingdom, and the greatest instrument under God of the happy reformation of this Church of England," was undoubtedly the master-spirit and chief artificer. To his Church he gave it—a priceless possession—bearing the imprint throughout of his cautious temper, gentle disposition, and extensive liturgical learning. Clever controversialist, on the other hand,



self-same words in English which were in Latin, saving a few things taken out." It was, in fact, the most conservative of the liturgies produced by the Reformation. The Book thus drawn up was readily accepted by Parliament in January and promulgated in England, Wales and Calais in June, 1549.

Ardent reformers such as John Hooper, who, having gone as far as Luther, were now beginning to look in the direction of Zwingli, were of opinion that the changes were not nearly sufficient; and many of the English divines went farther in this direction that was altogether approved by the foreign Protestant scholars, such as Bucer and Peter Martyr (appointed professors of theology at Cambridge and Oxford respectively), whose criticisms of the Book were studiously moderate in tone. But the desire for further alteration predominated, and at the special command of the King a fresh committee of revisers was appointed, with Cranmer at its head. Various alterations were eventually made, chiefly in the direction of restricting vestments, holidays, and the ritual of baptism, and consid-

and subtle theologian though Cranmer was, his Book has far more of religion than recrimination about it; it provokes the spirit of devotion rather than that of debate, and that is why, striking a deep chord in English hearts, it is on the lips of millions of our countrymen to this day. How the cruelty of Cranmer's enemies used the impressionability of a sensitive man to try and discredit the movement he symbolised is too well known to need or to bear repetition. He was done to death on March 21st, 1556. He died in the place where Ridley and Latimer had suffered, and whatever be thought of his recantations his final end was heroic enough. He had done with the quicksands of logic, legal formulas, and constitutional maxims, and had gained a foothold in conscience. The fight had been long and bitter, but he had reached a conclusion at length; he had "professed a good profession before many witnesses." (See *Thomas Cranmer*, by Prof. A. F. Pollard, 1904.) Cranmer's first *Book of Homilies* dates from 1547.



erable additions were made at the beginning of the morning service. The doctrinal theory of the sacrament (which Cranmer held to contain a spiritual presence conditioned by the faith of the recipient) was modified through the medium of a change in the Communion service, and the Communion was restricted to Sundays. Ridley first officiated from the new Prayer Book on All Saints' Day (November 1st, 1552). Next year the accession of Mary put an end to the reformed service, but in 1559 the 1552 liturgy was restored with a few but not unimportant alterations, framed with a view of comprehending as many as possible within the pale of the Church.

The harmony of the various parts of the Prayer Book is certainly one of its greatest claims to our admiration. The English of the Litany, Creed, and Lord's Prayer is, of course, extremely ancient. The Decalogue, Canticles, and Psalms are taken from the Great Bible (*i.e.* the old translation of Tyndale and Coverdale as revised by Cranmer). The eighty-three Collects, originally very ancient, were rendered in Edward VI.'s day, mostly by Cranmer. Other prayers were added in 1559, 1604, and 1661, when the beautiful prayer for All Sorts and Conditions of Men and the General Thanksgiving were first incorporated. But throughout all these modifications the same devout and conservative spirit was in the ascendant, and the result was a most beautiful sounding-board of English prose, "an accumulation of ancient wisdom, a bequest of ancient piety, the form of words and bond of faith uniting English worshippers with the saints and martyrs of antiquity."

Before we leave the Prayer Book altogether, and its exquisite patterns of English prose, we must mention, as having had a considerable influence upon English verse, the old Metrical Version of the Psalms. The original aim was to furnish the people with sacred ballads for everyday use, and the pioneer effort was "Certayne Psalms



chose out of the Psalter of David and drawn into English metre by Thomas Sternhold, groom of the King's Majesty's robes," about 1547; a second edition containing thirty-seven in place of nineteen psalms was published in 1549. Sternhold, of whom very little is known, died in this year, having written in all some forty versions, nearly all in the older form of Common Measure (C.M.), the ballad measure of *Chevy Chace,* with only two rhymes. In 1562, after various intermediate experiments, the Complete Psalter was published by John Daye as "The Whole Book of Psalms, collected into English metre by T. Sternhold, John Hopkins, and others: conferred with the Ebrue, with apt notes to sing them withal." The others include William Whittingham, John Pullain, Robert Wisdome, Richard Cox (Bishop of Ely), and Thomas Norton, the joint author of *Gorboduc.* Although not fully authorised, the Metrical Version was certainly permitted and used as *the* psalm book in many churches, and so it remained, in spite of the frowns of High Church and austere Puritans alike, and of the competition of "Tate and Brady" (1696), until well on in the eighteenth century, "a venerable monument of the Reformation." Its poetical merit was slight; of Sternhold and Hopkins it was said by Fuller, and constantly repeated, that their piety was better than their poetry; they had drunk more of Jordan than of Helicon. Yet if they had been more poetical, it is probably true that they would have been less popular. It must be remembered that when they were written the great outburst of Elizabethan poetry was still in the future. They had the merit of plain meaning, they were tunable, and of a striking fidelity to the original Hebrew. In their original form they are now quite extinct, but their fall was broken by the incorporation of considerable extracts into the most popular hymn-books. "It is pleasant to think that in Sternhold's 23rd, 'My Shepherd is the Living



Lord'; in the old 100th, 'All People that on Earth do Dwell'; in Kettra's 104th, 'My Soul, Praise the Lord,' and one or two more, we still retain some links with so venerable a book and history."

We can now resume the thread of the history which tells of the coping-stone put to the sumptuous edifice of Elizabethan translations by the appearance of the Authorised Version of the Bible in 1611. We had got as far as the appearance of Matthew's Bible, shortly followed in 1538-9 by two further revisions. The second of these in a revised form, with a preface by Cranmer, of April, 1540, was widely circulated in England and known as "The Great Bible." This was the Bible of the Edwardian reformers and the Bible presented to Elizabeth on her accession. It is the psalter of this version that we still use as printed in the Prayer Book. Another very careful revision was issued by English exiles at Geneva in 1560, and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth.[1] The scholars responsible for it had the advantage of highly finished Latin versions by Castalio and Beza. The disadvantage inherent in all the sixteenth and seventeenth-century work was, of course, in this—namely, that the Greek texts used were late and faulty as compared with some of the more authentic codices to which we now have access. The Geneva version was soon imported largely into this country, and the Great Bible as read in the churches was subjected to comparisons that were often disparaging.

Archbishop Parker, in consequence, took in hand a new translation, to be carried through by co-operative effort, to remove all errors and obscurities from the Great Bible, adhering still, however, to the scheme of a popular and not a literary version, retaining as much as was possible

[1] This is known to bibliophiles as the "Breeches Bible," because "breeches" is substituted for "apurns" in Genesis iii. 7. The text was first divided into "verses."



of the old phraseology. The work appeared in October, 1568, in a magnificent folio, with portraits of the Queen, Leicester, and Burleigh, 140 wood engravings, and the simple title "The Holie Bible." Of the revisers (who seem as a body to have relied very largely upon the Geneva version), eight were bishops, hence the name assigned to the penultimate version of a remarkable series, "The Bishops' Bible." It soon replaced the Great Bible, and was sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority for public use; but it did not supersede the Geneva. Eighty-six editions of the latter appeared between 1568 and 1611 to only twenty of the Bishops' Bible, which was, however, carefully revised as regards the New Testament in 1572.

The stimulus which prompted the setting on foot of the Authorized Version was mainly due to James I. The matter was broached at the Hampton Court Conference in January, 1604. The King pressed forward the scheme during the ensuing summer, and took a prominent part in selecting the fifty-four translators and allotting the work to them.

Forty-seven scholars were eventually divided into six groups and set to work in 1606-7. In 1610 the whole translation was revised by six delegates, two from Westminster, two from Oxford, and two from Cambridge, to whom six coadjutors were soon added. After seven years' steady work the MS. was finally revised for press by Dr. Miles Smith, aided by Bishop Bilson, and in 1611 the Authorised Version was imprinted at London by Robert Barker.[1] The book was stated to be produced by "his Majesty's special command," and "appointed to

[1] Octavo and quarto editions appeared in 1612; the original Folio in Roman type in 1616. Of the variations and errors in early issues a good many were silently corrected long before the Great Revision of 1881-5. The dates in the margin were inserted from Ussher's *Annales* in 1701.

be read in churches," by whose authority is not precisely known.[1]

The revisers did not attempt to render the Bible afresh into the common language of their own day. This may be seen in the quaint and highly decorative English of the dedication, and in the interesting, if somewhat bombastical, preface. Their great merit consists in the fact that they so fully retained the simple and racy idiom of the earlier versions. Occasionally they even replace a familiar word by one more archaic, *e. g.*, they substitute "charger" for "platter." As in the Liturgy, the Latin and Old English word may be seen side by side, as in act and deed, labour and work, transgression and sin, desert and wilderness, remission and forgiveness. Upon the whole, however, the Authorised Version is marked by an unusual predominance (greater even than in Swift) of Teutonic words. It is in every way a complex unity, the final product of a long series of strenuous, fortunate, converging efforts. The result of a century of toil and study from the conception by Tyndale to the conclusion in 1611, during which the researches of the ripest scholars, not of England alone, but of Europe, were absorbed into the work, it has been almost universally commended, not only for its fidelity, but also for its extraordinary force and beauty. Its harmony, simplicity, and energy have drawn panegyrics from foreigners and Catholics. Its English is, in the opinion of all the best judges, of uncommon beauty. "It lives in the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells. . . . Its felicities seem

[1] On the development of our English Bible, consult ***William Tyndale, a Biography***, by R. Demaus; Westcott's ***History of the English Bible*** (3rd ed. 1905); Eadie's ***English Bible***, 1876; Moulton's ***History of English Bible***, 1878; Lovett's ***Printed English Bible***, 1894; Dore's ***English Bibles*** (2nd ed. 1888); ***Quarterly Review***, April, 1870.



to be almost things instead of words; it is a part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness; the memory of the dead passes into it; the potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses; the power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. . . ." A striking testimony to its essential greatness is the fact that instead of a cause of division, in this land of sect and schism, it has ever been a bond between the different sects, for it was soon adopted by the Puritans (Scottish, as well as English), and preferred even to the Genevan. After the Koran, it is doubtful whether any book has been more recited or read. It was of special importance to this country from the fact that England had no Luther, Calvin, or Knox. Hers was a common soldiers' Reformation due largely to the circulation of the vernacular Bible. So it has become part of the national mind, and has permanently impressed upon that mind a certain purity of the classic age of English literature. Its noble figures, happy turns, and pithy sentiments are upon every lip. It pervades the whole literature of our country.



CHAPTER IV

RISE OF THE DRAMA

"The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral."—*Hamlet.*

"Few events in our literary history are so startling as this sudden rise of the Elizabethan drama."—Green's *Short History of the English People.*

Religion and the drama—Church festivals and moralities—The church, the market-place, the banquet-hall—Heywood's interludes—*Gorboduc*—Senecan plays.

THE evolution of religious worship leads inevitably to the exclusion of ecstatic elements and to the regularisation of every kind of religious demonstration within the bounds of a strict decorum. In the more vivid pages and passages of Church history conditions were different, and the great festivals of Holy Church during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries were commonly attended by strange orgies, saturnalia, and burlesques of sacred rites and mysteries in which the dramatic, animal, and loutish instincts beneath the cassocks of the innumerable vicars, minor clerks, acolytes, choir boys, and lay brethren in the Church found a free vent for expression. Singing, grimacing, drinking, and dressing-up in masks formed prominent features in the topsy-turvy mummings and *festi fatuorum,* with their Fool Bishops, Boy Bishops, Lords of Misrule, and the rest—of which Scott gives us a tantalising glimpse in his *Abbot.* The nobility gave them money as contemptuously as Theseus's courtiers threw coins to Bottom and his troupe, but the people adored these clownish and irreverent amusements, which were avowedly under-



taken for their delectation, *more antiquo, pristinum modum, "ad solacium populi."* The responsible clergy tried to discipline them, but usually quite in vain, for any attempt to suppress the mummeries invariably led to popular tumults and street riots. The popular drama of the professional troubadours, mimi, and buffoons was thus in a way borrowed by the Church, in the person of the inferior clergy, in order to amuse the people, to keep them in a good humour, and to inveigle pence from the pockets of the well-to-do.

But the connection of the Church with the rise of popular drama was a much closer and profounder one than this. In England, as in India, Greece, France, where you will, the theatre is immediately the outcome of an act of worship. Religion adopted, and may almost be said to have created, the drama. It was born in the sanctuary, and its primitive form in the modern world was that of a religious pageant designed to commemorate Gospel scenes by either direct or allegorical representation. In Greece, its evolution from a ritual dance at festivals, in which one half-chorus set to another and gradually introduced spokesmen, is almost equally roundabout and indirect.

Simultaneously with the growth of the folk-drama was a singular new birth of drama in the very bosom of the Church's own ritual. The Mass, the commemorations of Palm Sunday and of Good Friday, of Maundy Thursday and of Christmas Day, such services as those of the Tenebræ (or extinction of lights), or of the *tollite portas* (or the dedication of the Church)—all these contained strong elements of drama, together with a marked potentiality of dramatic development. Symbolism and mimetic action were already there. What was wanting was dialogue, and this was soon to be supplied by the practice of antiphonal singing. It is, indeed, from the antiphon, in which one-half of the choir answers the other, or a choir



as a whole answers its cantor or precentor, that the gradual development of the liturgical drama may most directly be traced.

An equivalent to the celebration of Easter was supplied for the Christmas festival by a representation of the adoration of the shepherds known as the Officium, or Misterium Pastorum, of which we have manuscripts dating back to the thirteenth century, and just as the Easter celebration centred round the sepulchre erected in the choir, so the embryo drama of the shepherds, and later that of the Magi or three kings, had its material starting-point in the crib with the Christ-child in the manger, and with a live ox and ass, which are still exhibited near the altar in Catholic churches at Christmas-time. At the same time a star lit with candles was hung from the roof of the church. With these plays, of the Pastores and the Stella, the Lamentation of Rachel was often amalgamated. This liturgical drama afforded a good introduction to the offering of oblations by the congregation; and we soon have similar representations springing up in the shape of a Daniel drama, a *Suscitatio Lazari,* and an Advent play representing a duel between Antichristus and Ecclesia. This evolution was practically complete by the thirteenth century, and during the hundred years from 1250 to 1350 a significant change takes place which transfers the presentment of these dramas from the clergy, and from the nave and choirs of the large churches, into the hands of the laity in their market-places and guild-halls. The natural result was the broadening of their human, as distinct from their religious, aspect. Conceived originally as a mere expansion of the regular office, with a view of bringing home the great events of the Gospel narrative to the hearts of the people, they came in time to be primarily spectacles to amaze the people and to make them laugh. The existing plays received accretions on every side. The texts were



amplified, new scenes were added, the dresses and properties were greatly elaborated, until the process culminated in the formation of those great dramatic cycles of which the English Corpus Christi plays are perhaps the most complete examples.

In a few extant examples the plan of the miracle play was extended to subject-matter other than religious in character. We thus have stories such as those of Jeanne of Arc, Griselda, Robert the Devil, and the Fall of Troy thrown into the shape of miracle dramas, or, as the French call them, mysteries. More important in its results was the extension of the miracle in the direction of allegory, giving rise to the morals or moralities, as they came to be called. The germ of these plays may be seen in the symbolism of some of the earlier miracles, such as that of Antichristus or the dialogue of the Heavenly Virtues, in which Truth and Righteousness denounced the guilty Adam, while Mercy and Peace pleaded in his favour. The Dance of Death was a subject which lent itself to similar treatment. The gross impartiality with which Death took liberties with Pope and Emperor, no less than with Clown and Beggar, was indeed an idea which took a strong hold upon the mediæval imagination. A similar motive was the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins, and the finest of these fifteenth-century moralities,[1] the now well-known *Everyman,* was evidently a growth from this same

[1] The morality which became so popular at the close of the fifteenth century must not be regarded as superseding the miracle drama, but as affording a pleasant variety of religious teaching upon the stage. As the miracle illustrated the narrative portion of the Church service, so the morality illustrated the sermon and the creed. This was done by means of allegories, many of which are inferior in force and vividness only to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War*, and *Mr. Badman* of John Bunyan. Of the older type of morality, the most typical are *The Castell of Perseverance*, perhaps as early as



root. There is a Dutch play on precisely the same theme as *Everyman,* and it has been much disputed which of the two is the original. It is not improbable that both plays have a common original.

We have seen how the religious drama gradually migrated from the church choir to the nave or churchyard, and then from the religious precincts to the guild-hall or market-place. The drama was now to migrate still farther, to the banqueting-hall. To this new type of drama specially suitable for a banquet in the hall of some great noble, the title of interlude—that is, merry dialogue between two or more performers—seems to have been given from the first. The ubiquitous minstrels, who must have suffered considerably from the competition of the guilds, especially as these latter seem to have travelled with their pageants, made a special point of the playing of these interludes. Many of them gave up the older minstrelsy as a specific calling and

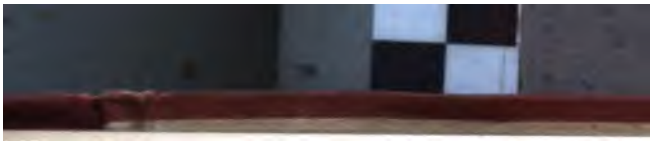
1400, *The Pride of Life*, *Mundus et Infans*, and *The Moral Play of the Summoning of Everyman.* Among moralities of the second and later type, in which the dramatic tendency is more conspicuous, and the allegory not quite so much obtruded, are *Man Kynd*, written perhaps about 1480; *The Goodly Interlude of Nature*, written by Archbishop Morton's chaplain, Henry Medwall, a few years later; and *Hyckescorner*, a moral interlude in the later years of Henry VII., containing humorous dialogue, real characters under allegorical names, and some new situations, such as the setting of Pity in the stocks. In the same class must be placed a later and much duller Protestant interlude called *Lusty Juventus.* The later interludes of John Rastell and John Heywood, in which the moral and allegorical element is wholly subordinated, if not entirely dropped out, bring us to the very threshold of the Elizabethan farcical comedy, to the evolution of which the moral interlude had contributed most powerfully by its insistence upon social types. The morality, gradually dropping the didactic purpose and the allegorical form bequeathed to it by its old traditions, passes insensibly into the imitation of manners. See that great work of exploration, Chambers's *Mediæval Drama.*



took up interlude playing, though they commonly retained their old livery and put themselves, as before, under the protection of nobles and persons of honour. The apparatus necessary for these interludes was on an extremely small scale as compared with that of the older pageants. In exceptional cases, a special room seems to have been put apart for them. A relic of the old minstrel days was the prayer for the sovereign with which their entertainment concluded. They soon became very popular in the towns, where, after a first performance before the municipality, they would find a profitable pitch in the courtyard or some old-fashioned inn with convenient outside galleries. In some villages they maintained the right of playing in the church, probably on trestles at the west end, but more ordinarily they erected their stage on the village-green. In the course of their peregrinations they doubtless excited the emulation of local amateurs, such as the Mechanicals of Athens (Stratford), who sometimes played in waggons. The children of St. Paul's and of the Chapel Royal, gentlemen of the Inns of Court, scholars of Westminster, Eton, and of the universities proved more serious rivals of the professional players.

From the morality the interlude drew abstractions; from the farce, a variant form specially popular in France (*L'Avocat Patelin*), it drew social types. The possibility of vital drama lay in the direction of an advance to the portraiture of individualities.

John Heywood, the most noted writer of farces and interludes that the court of Henry VIII. could boast, was born in London about 1497, studied at Broadgates Hall (Pembroke College), Oxford, became a skilled musician on lute and virginal, and was entered in 1515 as one of the King's singing men. He was specially attached to the Princess Mary: instructed her, in all probability, in the mysteries of virginal playing, and played interludes for her amuse-



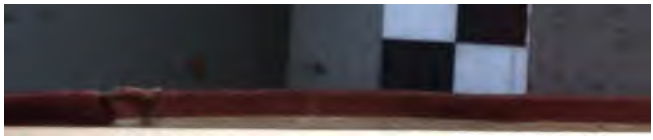
ment with the choirboys under him. On Mary's coronation Heywood uttered a Latin speech in her honour as she entered the precincts of St. Paul's. His later history is uncertain, but he probably lived well into Elizabeth's reign down to the dawn of the great drama in the 'eighties. In 1575 he wrote to Burleigh from Mechlin. He appears to have been a humble member of the party of reform within the Church, of which More and Erasmus were the luminaries; and the keen interest which More always took in the stage as a vehicle of instruction may have quickened the zeal of Heywood in writing some pieces for it which should not be so purely moralising and didactic as satirical and amusing. Hence *The Dialogue of Wit and Folly, The Play of Love, The Playe called the Foure P.P., The Play of the Wether, The Pardoner and the Frere,* and his "masterpiece," *The Mery Play betwene Johan Johan the husband, Tyb his wyfe, and Syr Jhan, the preest,* were all written somewhere about 1530. In approaching this last production, as in approaching Chaucer's tales of the Miller and Reeve, or, later, *The Merry Wives,* we must, of course, leave our morality behind, and accept the playwright's and taleteller's convention that cuckoldy and cuckold-making are prime subjects for humour. "This granted," says Mr. Pollard, "it will be difficult to find a flaw in the play. Like *The Pardoner and the Frere,* it is short, only about half the length of the plays of *Love, The Wether,* and *The Foure P.P.,* and it gains greatly from being less weighted with superfluities. Johan Johan himself, with his boasting and cowardice, his eagerness to be deceived and futile attempts to put a good face on the matter, his burning desire to partake of the pie, his one moment of self-assertion to which disappointed hunger spurs him, and then his fresh collapse to ludicrous uneasiness—who can deny that he is a triumph of dramatic art, just human enough and natural enough to seem very human and natural on the



stage, but with the ludicrous side of him so sedulously presented to the spectator that there is never any risk of compassion for him becoming uncomfortably acute? The handling of Tyb and Syr Jhan is equally clever."

From the farcical situations that had hitherto performed the task of holding up the ends of an interlude, we now begin to get the idea of an organic plot. The two elements—native and foreign, English and classical, farcical and comic—are seen together admirably side by side in *Roister Doister,* a merry "Comedie or Enterlude," written, it is believed, about 1550 [1] by a somewhat notorious Eton and Westminster master, Nicholas Udall (1506—1556), and first printed in all probability in 1552, though the first dated copy we have bears 1567 on the title, with the addition of a conventional tag in honour of Queen Elizabeth. The plays of Plautus and Terence had been much admired and studied since the revival of learning; and in this comedy, though features borrowed from the old vernacular drama are by no means wanting, the two principal characters, Ralph, a pusillanimous, vain, and foolish braggart (the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus), and Matthew Merygreeke, a needy adventurer and parasite, are types directly borrowed from the Roman stage. A school drama of a similar type, probably written about the same time, and also based upon Plautus, is the anonymous *Jacke Jugeler,* written, like *Roister Doister,* in rough twelve-syllable rhyming couplets. The element of broad jocularity is very strong, both in this play and in the probably contemporary *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* first printed apparently in 1575, but acted not later than 1563, and perhaps a full decade earlier. This coarse specimen of early comedy was written for a college entertainment, very probably by W[illiam] S[tevenson], a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, who died a prebendary of Durham in 1575; the form of verse is not Alexandrine but rhyming

[1] Possibly ten years earlier, for his pupils at Eton.



fourteeners, the dialogue is thrown into a more or less conventional rustic dialect, and, unlike its predecessors in English comedy, both plot and characters are purely native. The famous drinking song at the commencement of Act II., "Back and syde go bare, go bare," is extant in more than one version, and may be a little, though not much, older than the body of the play. The *Misogonus* of Thomas Richardes (?) written in 1560, and embodying hints from Terence; the *Damon and Pythias* (1565) of Richard Edwardes, containing features of courtly allegory strongly suggestive of the later efforts of Lyly; and *The Supposes* (1566) of George Gascoigne, a prose translation of Ariosto's *I Suppositi,* and the most Jonsonian of English comedies before Ben Jonson—are all interesting and typical works of this transition period. The genius for humorous drama which the English people had shown so unmistakably in the shepherds' plays in the old miracle cycles, and in some of the interludes of Heywood, is here seen to be quickened, directed, and, above all, shaped by fusion with foreign ideals and imitation of classical examples. The cross-fertilisation of native genius by foreign *esprit* and sense of form which is seen so clearly in 1066, and later upon the eve of the Augustan and Romantic movements in English literature, is seen nowhere more significantly than in the English drama during the quarter of a century preceding the marvellous efflorescence known as the Elizabethan drama.

Between comedy and tragedy there stands a species of drama almost peculiar to England, of immense popularity and no little importance as showing the vitality of native dramatic development. This is the native chronicle drama or history play—a species to which Shakespeare himself devoted, roughly speaking, as much as a third part of his energies, and which is represented in the first folio of his *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* by a complete section



to itself. We can trace the evolution of this kind very distinctly from the old English morality. We can see the morality, first tinctured with history, and so becoming an historical morality, and then gradually shedding the morality and assuming the features of the chronicle history familiar to us in *King John* and *Richard III.* The process may be observed in an interlude like the *Kyng Johan* (1548) of John Bale (1495—1563), a Suffolk and St. John's, Cambridge, man, who married and took orders, thus committing himself to the Protestant side, and, after the ordinary vicissitudes of that age, was promoted by Edward VI. to a bishopric (Ossory) and confirmed by Elizabeth. He treats King John as a victim of papal tyranny, and in doing this the veil of allegory gets torn aside and the real personalities of history stand revealed. Here we can see, as it were, the abstractions of the older morality resolving themselves into historical characters. Thus Sedition becomes Stephen Langton; Private Wealth, Cardinal Pandulph; Usurped Power, Innocent III.; and so on. It is clearly a step forward from this to the "troublesome" chronicles which were the immediate forerunners of Shakespeare's histories. The admixture of the foreign element and of classical influence in the evolution of the chronicle drama is comparatively very small. But the type serves as a very valuable link between the development of comedy and the development of tragedy.

Another important link was the strong taste for the plays of Seneca and for Italian versions of one or two of the plays of Euripides, which set in about the middle of the sixteenth century. Seneca appealed strongly to the Italians as a famous bridge between the greater models of Greek antiquity and the more facile ideals of the Renaissance, and a taste for Seneca must rank high in the list of Italian novelties which the English scholars of the sixteenth century were so proud of importing from the Trans-

alpine peninsula. The rising confraternity of critics (it is hardly an exaggeration to say) would not look at a serious play unless it were modelled upon an Italian design, and by preference an Italian adaptation from Seneca or one of the remoter stars of antiquity. Early in Elizabeth's reign Seneca's *Tenne Tragedies* were successively translated into English by five scholars—Neville, Nuce, Studley, Jasper Heywood, and John Newton—and collected in a single volume by the last-mentioned in 1581. Long before this the direct influence of Seneca upon English drama was shown in the first English tragedy, entitled *Gorboduc,* which was acted on Twelfth Night, 1561, by gentlemen of the Inner Temple before Queen Elizabeth. *Gorboduc* (printed 1565, and again in 1571 as *Ferrex and Porrex*) was a joint production, being the work of Thomas Norton (1532—1584), a London, Cambridge, and Inner Temple man, who married a daughter of Cranmer's, and though successful at the Bar, gave much attention to literature, in conjunction with Thomas Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst, author of the stately *Induction* to *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559-63); Sackville wrote the last two acts, and perhaps revised the whole. The plot of *Gorboduc* was derived from a British legend of the King Lear variety, to be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History; but the management of it is thoroughly Senecan. The action is not represented on the stage, but is reported by professional messengers or eye-witnesses, after the Greek fashion. As a substitute for it, we have a dumb-show before each act, signifying allegorically the nature of the events to follow, and finally there is a chorus of four sage men of Britain who comment upon the course of events at the close of each act. The external form of the piece, with its acts and scenes, choruses, stock characters, ghosts, and ghastly incidents reported—not enacted—is thus absolutely Sen-



ecan; while the moral is one grateful to Tudor ears, the curse of civil war and the horrors of a disputed succession. But one novel feature in *Gorboduc,* perhaps the most important of all, remains still to be noted.

Since the appearance of Trissino's *Sophonisba* in 1515, the Italians had been increasingly given to combine prose and verse, tragic and comic effect, and rhyme with *blank verse.* The two English authors, now, in their attempt to be completely faithful in form to their classical and Italian models, discarded the rhymed metre (generally twelve or fourteen-syllable couplets), which had hitherto been the sole dramatic vehicle, and adopted in its place the new blank verse which Surrey had but recently used, as we have seen, for his version of two books of Virgil's *Æneid,* and which seemed to them, as to him, to be the one way of reproducing the unrhymed measures of Greece and Rome. The verse, like the texture of the play generally, is thoroughly wooden. There may be flesh and blood, as Charles Lamb remarked, if we could only get at it; but we can't. Ligneous as the drama is, however, and as its immediate successors are, their importance as fixing the type for the drama of air and fire that was to come, and to which Marlowe was to lend the resonance of his "mighty line," can hardly be overrated.

Having dealt so fully with *Gorboduc,* it will be necessary to do little more than enumerate its Senecan successors, such as *The Lamentable Tragedy mixed full of pleasant Mirth, conteyning the Life of Cambises, King of Persia, his many Wicked Deeds and Odious Death,* written in 1570 by Thomas Preston (1537—1598), another Cambridge man; the *Tancred and Gismunda,* by Robert Wilmot, played before the Queen at the Inner Temple, in 1568, the story again taken from the Italian and treated in the Italian manner; the *Promos and Cassandra* of George Whetstone (1544—1587), taken from the *Hecatommithi* of Cinthio and printed in 1578; the *Jocasta* of George Gas-

coigne, based on the Italian version of the Euripidian *Phœnissæ*, by Ludovico Dolci, and written in blank verse much after the pattern of *Gorboduc;* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, produced before the Queen at Greenwich by eight members of Gray's Inn (of whom Francis Bacon was one) in February, 1588. Impossible from the point of view of intrinsic literary interest, these plays are all of an historical value as illustrating the final process by which English tragedy (which admittedly owed more to foreign examples than even comedy) was evolved from mysteries and moralities through the transitional phase of chronicle-histories. The enumeration brings us to the threshold of the immediate predecessors of Shakespeare; to the mysterious ten years from 1580 to 1590, when the bats that flit about the twilight of the drama give place to the immediate harbingers of the mightiest dawn in all our literature.

In order to understand this marvellous transformation-scene we shall have to go for some assistance to the political and social history of the period.[1]

[1] Among the more indispensable books for the study of the rise of the Drama in England are J. Payne Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, 1879; Dr. A. W. Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*, 1899; E. K. Chambers's *The Mediæval Stage*,* 1903; A. W. Pollard's *English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes* (ed. 1904); Gayley's *Representative English Comedies*, 1903. In addition to these the student of the ancient English Drama will be anxious to consult Dodsley's *Collection of Old English Plays*, and the texts of the four great cycles of miracle plays, edited—the *York Plays*, by Lucy Toulmin Smith; the *Chester Plays*, by T. Wright; the *Towneley* or *Wakefield Plays*, by England and Pollard; and the *Ludus Coventriæ*, by Halliwell Phillipps. And references on the subject generally may also be given to Ten Brink's *History of English Literature* (Bell, vol. ii.), Jusserand's *Le Théâtre en Angleterre*, Davidson's *Studies in the English Miracle Plays* (1892), Courthope's *History of English Poetry* (vol. i.), Creizenach's *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, 1893, and K. L. Bates's *The English Religious Drama*, 1893, with a bibliography.



CHAPTER V

PRE-SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

"It is especially with reference to the drama and its characteristics in any given nation, or at any particular period, that the dependence of genius on the public taste becomes a matter of the deepest importance."—COLERIDGE, *Lectures.*

Actors and theatres—Lyly—Greene—Peele—Kyd—Marlowe—*Tamburlaine—Faustus—Edward II.—Arden of Feversham.*

THE marvellously rapid expansion of English life and literature in the middle of Elizabeth's reign is seen nowhere more clearly than in that exuberance of dramatic production which first made itself felt between 1580 and 1590. The famous writer of interludes, John Heywood, lived to the very threshold of this period, but the interludes themselves had long been superseded as an old-fashioned transitional form. Deeper still in oblivion were the moralities or allegorical plays from which the interludes had, in a sense, been evolved. Such plays lingered on, to be sure, in the country and among ruder town audiences, but in cultured circles they were quite eclipsed by novelties bearing the stamp of Italy or the classics. Comedies in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish were thoroughly "raked," as Greene expressly declares, to furnish the playhouses of London. Between these admirers of classical models and the conservative audiences who loved the old medleys, there were, no doubt, some eclectics who aimed at creating a drama out of elements furnished by each of the other schools. Nearly all the attempts in the various kinds at the period have utterly disappeared. Those that have survived best are the most ambitious and

the most experimental, such as Edwardes's *Damon and Pythias* and Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra,* and several plays by George Gascoigne. But although several of these are important historically, they are almost, without exception, dreary, sapless, and unexhilarating. In ten years' time, in the interval between the appearance of *The Shepheards Calender, Astrophel and Stella, Faustus,* and *The Jew of Malta,* what an extraordinary change seems suddenly to have come over the landscape! The golden age of our literature has, in effect, suddenly set in; and this age is dominated by the romantic drama. By the close of Elizabeth's reign twelve theatres existed in London, where in 1558 not a single public playhouse could have been heard or even dreamed of. Dramatic poets sprang up by tens, and plays, many of which have taken their place in the world's literature, were written by fifties. How did this surprising literature so suddenly come into being? From a seemingly barren waste, how sprang up this chorus of song—a chorus so melodious that in poetry Elizabethan has almost become a synonym for sweet and tunable?

The more we study it the more clearly perhaps shall we discern the sharply cut characteristics which fitted this one age of a small people in a small country to form the alembic of such a marvellous intellectual product as the drama of Shakespeare.

The sudden and unexpected character of the development might be compared with the blossoming period of Athenian literature in the generation that followed that of Themistocles. It was an age of resistance to external pressure, and the extraordinary success of Henry VIII. and of his daughter Elizabeth in affirming national independence in every way, both in secular and also in religious matters, can hardly have failed greatly to exhilarate that instinct of national identity and national pride which



the whole trend of circumstances in the closing years of the fifteenth century had contributed to prepare. Free in respect to mind, body, and estate to an extent rarely, if ever, attained before or since, Englishmen were all the time, politically speaking, under a despotism. They had no hand whatever in steering the ship of State. Such a combination has ever been favourable to the emergence of great writers.

The time was one of daring expansion and of vehement utterance. England had thrown off its old insularity and was looking outwards into the world; its vision was not yet blurred and narrowed by Puritanism. The national genius was craving for popular literary expression. The overwhelming popularity of the stage pointed superior minds to the conquest of the Drama, where the conflict seemed to lie between the popular drama, which was not literary, and the literary drama, which was not popular. As a whole the playgoers, with Queen Elizabeth at their head, were demanding situation-plays with ingenious devices from Italian novels, spiced with plenty of native English wit, and with a large infusion of jigging and clownage. Of the vast majority of plays produced under these influences before 1588 we know little or nothing. The names of some of them have survived, but most of them have perished utterly. The playwright then did not mind mixing tragedy with comedy, prose with verse, town with country, kings with clowns. He set at naught the unities of classical and Aristotelian tradition. Sidney and his scholarly friends laughed at the absurdities of the popular theatre. They eschewed rhyme, and hoped to be able to bring hexameter into general use. They sighed after Terence, Italy, and Seneca, and wished to have tragedy, comedy, and pastoral carefully discriminated with a due observance of the unities of time and place—such a development, in fact, as led in France to

the declamatory drama of Racine. The bulk of the play-going public cared for none of these things. They prefered the rhyme of *King Cambises* to the blank verse of *Gorboduc*. They liked their playwrights to leap lightly over great intervals of time and space, and thought themselves "ill-provided if they were not taken within the space of two hours from Genesis to the Day of Judgment." The public, indeed, were ready to follow a dramatic author of vigorous imagination wherever he desired to lead them. These were the circumstances in which great leaders and innovators responded to the nation's literary need, and in which during the years between 1579 and 1589 such amazing strides were made.

At the same time another influence of the greatest possible importance was in operation—a change, namely, in the condition of the theatre by the growth of a class of habitual spectators and of professional performers.

The details of the transformation are not recoverable; but it is clear that during the generation that preceded 1580 the permanent stage gradually discarded the homely properties of the movable platform; the hall or inn-yard is superseded by the regular theatre; the servitor or strolling minstrel by the professional player; the morality, comic or serious, by comedy and tragedy; and the clerk or court poet, who wrote interludes, by the professional dramatist or playwright.

The old-fashioned moralities were played by roving companies, at first in open spaces or inn-yards, afterwards in the banqueting-halls of nobles. Early, however, in Henry VIII.'s reign, or even before 1509 in some cases, the great nobles began to attach permanent troupes of players (by origin choristers) to their households.

In the early days of Elizabeth the principal companies of these trained actors were Lord Leicester's, Lord Warwick's (afterwards Lord Hunsdon's), and Lord Clinton's



(afterwards known as the Earl of Sussex's men). In addition to the adult performers (all of whom were men) there were troupes of boy-actors, composed of the choirs of the Chapel Royal and St. Paul's. When not playing at court or the houses of their patrons, these companies as a rule made use of inn-yards, such as the Bell and Cross Keys in Gracechurch Street, the Bull in Bishopsgate, or the Belle Savage on Ludgate Hill. Leicester's influence with the Queen enabled him in 1574 to procure for his "servants" a royal patent empowering them to perform within the City of London and throughout the realm, provided that their plays were licenced by the Master of Revels. But the company was to meet with strenuous opposition to the exercise of these privileges. The Corporation of London was the determined enemy of the stage, on the double ground of the immorality of many of the performers and their productions, and the peril of contagion in time of plague. Accordingly in 1576 it issued an order that no theatrical performances should be given in public within the city bounds. This order led to a prolonged contest between the Corporation and the Privy Council, which had a highly important result. The players, relying on the favour of the court, yet not daring openly to defy the authority of the Lord Mayor, established themselves in permanent buildings just beyond the boundaries of the city. Here they were outside the jurisdiction of the Corporation, and yet close enough to the town to permit of both the citizens and the court gallants being present at their performances. An early dinner over, the pleasureseekers of the day would stroll down to the Strand to see what flags were flying across the river; then, having made their selection, they would cross the Thames in a veritable armada of row-boats for the entertainment houses of Bankside. The temporary structure in the inn-yard had given place to permanent buildings in the

suburbs, such as the houses of Shoreditch (the Theatre and the Curtain, 1576-7), of Bankside, Southwark (the Rose, 1592; the Hope, the Swan; the Globe, built, 1599), and of Newington Butts; in addition to which there was the Blackfriars. The stage had passed from a nomadic to a settled condition.

Before the end of the sixteenth century, at a time when Paris had but a single playhouse, London was girdled with theatres, of which the most famous were the Fortune, near Cripplegate, and the Globe. In these playhouses a medley of influences, made up of the practice of the itinerant stage, the learning of the universities and the Inns of Court, the pictorial and scenic effects aimed at in the court masks and pageants, were focussed in a common centre. The "thronging" audiences were composed of all classes, so that the dramatist had to take account of various and often conflicting tastes in the composition of his play.

As for the theatres themselves, the best of them were simple wooden buildings, round or hexagonal in shape—Shakespeare's "wooden O." Some of the smaller theatres were roofed in, but the larger ones stood open to the air. The performances took place, roughly speaking, between two and five in the afternoon—in the summer, during which the companies travelled from town to town, probably rather later; but in the absence of long "waits," a five-act play and an after-piece, or "jig," were easily compressed into two and a quarter hours, "the two hours' traffic of our stage." Performances at court were ordinarily given in the evening, and with a greatly enhanced splendour of *mise-en-scène*. The public theatres advertised on posts and in booksellers' shops. A flag marked the day of a performance, and when all was ready a trumpet sounded, and the play began. Playgoers who could afford the luxury were accommodated with stools upon the stage; others might



take boxes or rooms just above the heads of the groundlings standing in the circular space of the yard. Scenery, in the modern sense, was almost wholly lacking, but costly properties were not uncommon. A "traverse" or curtain of drapery drawn upon a rod from the centre was at the rear of the stage. The stage itself projected apronwise into the pit or courtyard, so that the actors were brought close to the spectators beneath and around them. At the back of the front stage was a shallow rear stage, which could be partitioned off by means of the "traverse"; above was a balcony or gallery. Distinguished visitors occasionally occupied part of this, but it was also used by the actors. On this gallery stood the citizens who held parley with King John and Philip Augustus. To this balcony was Antony drawn up. On it stood Juliet when she bade farewell to Romeo upon her wedding night. Pieces were acted continuously—no waits—and deep and shallow, located and unlocated scenes, were as far as possible alternated. No actresses appeared upon the English boards [1] and all female parts were played by boys. Trained boys were in great demand, and were bought and sold like expert footballers at the present day. Coryat was surprised at Venice to find that women could sustain female parts almost, if not quite, as well as these "scrubby" boys. But, generally speaking, in comparison with the home product, the foreign theatres were "beggarly." The incidental songs and music were excellent; the dresses were choice; the lack of scenery was compensated by an amplitude of action and phraseology, just as the lack of programmes was supplied by placards. The "poet" in Ben Jonson's time got "ten pound the play," in addition sometimes to forty shillings for a dedication if the play were printed; but this was seldom done with the company's

[1] The only employment a woman could obtain in the theatre is said to have been that of "gatherer" at the entrance.



consent, so great was the fear of rival troupes getting hold of the text. As it was, a good stage-piece was often filched, either by means of stenographers sent to take down the play, or through the unscrupulous agency of impecunious actors. Occasionally, however, books of the play (the slender "quartos") were sold in the theatre for a few pence.

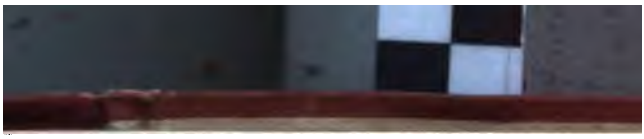
Then, as now, people crowded to witness a new play, especially when there was a chance of seeing in a new part such actors as Alleyn or Burbage, Will Kemp, or Nat Field. And while the players counted on the *bourgeoisie* for applause, they looked for a more discriminating approval from the nobles. The troupes were now noblemen's servants in name only, but many of the leading nobles were ardent connoisseurs of plays and acting, and courtiers of highest distinction (Southampton, Essex) contributed large sums to playhouse treasuries. The leading actors were profit-sharers, and, as will have been seen, they looked well after their business. There was indeed nothing amateurish about the Elizabethan stage. Coleridge's "naked room and a blanket" is somewhat *hors ligne* in a description of its bustling boards and full treasuries. Marvellous as was the development of dramatic art between the accession of the play-loving Elizabeth and 1588, the progress towards perfection in the matter of stagecraft was fully commensurate with it.

Research has done much to dissipate the dense haze which formerly hung over the eastern horizon of great drama in England. Of the precentors of the great dramatic chorus as a whole, there still remains much to be learned. Many plays have perished. Other striking dramas, such as *Arden of Feversham*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Edward III.*, are unprovided with authors. Five dramatists of the period, however, have emerged more or less completely from the twilight, each of whom has con-



tributed a definite constructive feature to the building-up of the dramatic edifice—a pillar here, a window there, a portal outside. The only great name among them, that of Marlowe, is that of a mighty genius indeed, but of a genius undeveloped and rather poetic than purely dramatic. He contributed the spirit of poetic romance, the fire of intensity, the enthusiasm for new, grandiose, and revolutionary ideals and the vehicle of a sounding blank verse. Next, Kyd contributed the element of melodramatic horror; Peele a pastoral sweetness in flowing blank verse, the honeyed cadences of which are not seldom echoed in Shakespeare; Greene, together with a harvesting of native drollery and folklore, a tradition of sweet, forgiving women and a verdure of English fields and hedgerows. After Marlowe, by his refining influence upon form, and his excellence in witty dialogue, lyrical interlude, and classical imagery, no one contributed more perhaps than John Lyly. We shall deal with these predecessors of Shakespeare in a reverse order to that in which we have just enumerated them, commencing with Lyly.

John Lyly entered Magdalen College, Oxford, at the beginning of 1569 at the age of sixteen, his father being, it is surmised, a man of Kent, and son of the famous grammarian, William Lyly or Lilly. He graduated B.A. in April, 1573, M.A. 1575, and probably settled in London in the Savoy four or five years later. His first work, *Euphues, the Anatomie of Wit,* was published at the close of 1578, and the sequel entitled *Euphues and his England* came out fifteen months later, about March, 1580. At this time he seems to have been private secretary to the Earl of Oxford, who first suggested to him the writing of plays for the court. Oxford was at the time Lord High Chamberlain, and he must have been gratified at the success with which his *protégé* adapted classical and mythological themes to the flattery of their royal mistress.



Lyly's ambition for years was to obtain the post of Master of the Revels at court, but hope was persistently frustrated.

Of his eight plays, *Campaspe* may be termed an historical play; *Mother Bombie* is a comedy of contemporary life with a Terentian plot; *Sapho, Endymion,* and *Midas* are mythological comedies of the court; while the remaining three, *Galathea, Love's Metamorphosis,* and *The Woman in the Moon,* are pastoral comedies approaching the form of masques. In *Campaspe,* which was probably produced in 1580, history was first treated in an imaginative way for the stage. The prose in which the play is written has a good deal of animation in it, its chief defect being a lack of passion.[1] In *Endymion* he ventured on a daring transcription of the history of the reign, and in *Midas* embodies the national sense of triumph over Philip of Spain. From Lyly's witty, sprightly, and mocking girls Shakespeare took a number of hints for his picture gallery. Lyly wrote his *Pappe with a Hatchet* in September, 1589. In 1601 he wrote a second despairing petition to the Queen for some adequate reward for his years of service. At the close of the reign he appears to have sat in Parliament more than once for the borough of Aylesbury. He is known to have had children and debts, but seems to have obtained little satisfaction from the Queen. The register of St. Bartholomew-the-Less records Lyly's burial on November 30th, 1606, being then fifty-two years of age.

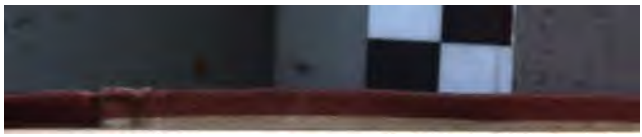
[1] The chief authority for *Campaspe* is a passage in Pliny's *Natural History*, Book XXXV. It was printed in 1584. The story of *Galathea* was suggested by Ovid. It was probably written about 1584 and printed in 1592. *Sapho and Phao* was based on Ovid's *Epistles*, and was probably written about 1581 and printed in 1584. *Endymion*, an allegorical pastoral, may have been written in 1579, but has also been assigned to the year 1584-5. As to the meaning of the allegory, the opinions of experts, such as Halpin, Baker, Bond, J. D. Wilson, and Feuillerat, are in conflict.



A good epitaph for him would have been that phrase in *Euphues*: "I have ever thought so superstitiously of wit that I fear I have committed idolatry against wisdom." His six court comedies were printed in 1632, and *Euphues* as late as 1718; but after that it disappeared from the English press for 150 years.

Original in form, refined in manner, purged of all the earthliness of the old vernacular drama, Lyly's plays are miracles of quip, quirk, antithesis, pun, conceit, simile, pleasant allusion, and verbal fence. They were acted at the court, where the author was able to gratify to the full his taste for erudite allusion and curious expression. Sidney and his erudite friends, inimical to *Euphues* though they were, might appreciate them. Human interest, dramatic situation, characterisation, emotion—they have none! The plays of Lyly have the form of true comedy, but not its substance; they are as unsubstantial as the moonbeams extracted from cucumbers which Gulliver saw in Laputa. In formal respects, however—and form in the drama goes for much—they exhibit a striking originality. Putting aside Gascoigne, Lyly was the first to write prose comedy in England; he was also the first to write comedy that ignored the gross popular taste, clear of the old English tradition, and depending on æsthetic and intellectual qualities alone. He bequeathed a taste in repartee and witty retort to Shakespeare himself, and the characteristics of Lylyan dialogue are aptly summed up by Shakespeare in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: "a fine volley of words, gentlemen, and quickly shot off."

Robert Greene was born at Norwich about 1560, graduated at Cambridge (St. John's) in 1579, and then, according to his own account, went abroad. After some roystering and dissolute adventures in France and Spain, he returned to England about 1580. Five years later he married, but, after spending the marriage portion, left wife



and child and settled in London. There he was joined by his friend Thomas Nash, and supported himself by his flowing pen until his final or death-bed "repentance" in August, 1592. He died on September 3rd, and was buried "in the new churchyard by Bethlehem Hospital." In later life he accused himself of a great variety of crimes; but his works are singularly free from immorality or grossness, and, in the absence of better evidence, we may well doubt if Greene was a man of inherently vicious character, and not merely an easily led and reckless pleasure-seeker of notoriously irregular life. Except that he possessed a lyric gift of a high order, his resemblance to Villon may be taken to be slight. In the affairs of this world, indeed, Greene seems to have been as improvident, as feckless, and as inconsiderate as a little child. In literature he achieved a reputation in the first place for his journalistic industry and lightning rapidity; both the faculty and the imperative need for scribbling remained with him to the end. He made copy out of his spells of sottishness, out of his neglect of his wife, and even out of his last illness. In 1588 he attacked Marlowe for his "drumming" blank verse; and on his deathbed, in his *Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592) he bitterly reproached Shakespeare with being a low actor and poacher upon the preserves of the old college wits, who thinks himself, forsooth, the only Shakescene in the country. Yet Greene's faculty for spontaneous production both in prose and verse was brilliant, and spasmodic and fragmentary though his literary output may be, we cannot fail to regard him with interest as one of the men, if not of genius, at any rate of exuberant literary vigour and vitality, who straightened the way for the great romantic movement in Elizabethan England. Greene was a bright and spontaneous lyrist, and a most industrious novelist and pamphleteer. His plays are not known to have exceeded six in



number: *A Looking-Glass for London and England,* written in collaboration with Thomas Lodge in 1587-8, and printed in 1594; *Alphonsus, King of Aragon,* a ranting imitation of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* written in 1588 and printed in 1599; *Historie of Orlando Furioso,* based on Ariosto (xxii.), written in 1588 and printed in 1594; *The Honourable Historie of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,* written in 1589 and printed in 1594; *The Scottish Historie of James IV.,* based partly on a tale of Cinthio's, with a curious chorus prelude introduced by Oboram, King of Fairies, and a quaint clown, Slipper, written in 1590 and printed in 1598; and *George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield,* a Robin Hood and Edward I. drama, written about 1590-91 and printed in 1599. One of these only need arrest our attention.

The Honourable Historie of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay was probably produced in emulation of Marlowe's *Faustus.* Both plays deal with the very ancient fable (to go back no farther than Simon Magus) of a compact made by a man with the Evil One, Marlowe basing his play upon the German Faust-book of 1587, Greene upon a prose tract (of which no early copy is known) dealing with the legendary history of Friar Bacon (*i.e.* Roger Bacon of Oxford), his magic crystal, his brazen head, and scheme for encircling England with a wall of brass. If we conclude that *Faustus* was written in the autumn of 1588, we may safely assume that *Friar Bacon* was produced about six months later. There is, however, no question of imitation, the two plays being worked out on entirely different lines. Marlowe's play looks forward to the terror that Shakespeare inspired in *Macbeth;* Greene looks backward to the old morality, with its well-worn buffooneries. It is one of the last pieces in which the devil appeared *in propria persona* upon the London stage, and the magical incidents are all described not only without the least semblance of a

shudder, but with the greatest possible joviality and gusto. Upon the original legend Greene engrafts a medley thoroughly typical of his quaint English humour and versatile talent.

George Peele (whose fondness for Devonshire comparisons in his plays suggests a Devonshire origin) was the son of a clerk of Christ's Hospital, and was educated at that school, whence he proceeded to Broadgates Hall, now Pembroke College, Oxford, where Heywood also had studied. He migrated, however, and graduated B.A. from Christ Church in 1577. Four years later he left Oxford for London, and at first turned his graceful pen to the production of literary tributes and compliments in return for stipulated fees.[1] This source of income running dry, he abandoned himself, despite the warnings of his friend Greene, to write for the common players. He resembled Greene in some respects, and Greene wrote of him in his *Groatsworth* as a fellow-sinner. His life does not appear to have been in any sense a counterpart of his sweet and innocuous poetry. He was often put to humorous shifts for the bare means of subsistence, and he died distressfully in or about 1597. Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), ascribes a disgraceful death to him. Some eight years afterwards his notoriety suggested a label for a compilation of extravagant and somewhat musty practical jokes (in some of which a suspicious likeness may be detected to anecdotes of François Villon), styled *Merrie conceited Jests of George Peele, gentleman, some time a Student in Oxford.*

[1] Some of his later occasional and complimentary poems are exquisitely graceful, and illustrate a remarkable deftness in smooth blank verse rhythm by no means devoid of dignity. *Polyhymnia*, written to celebrate one of the annual coronation day tilting matches (November 17th) and published in 1590, concludes some majestic lines with the noble irregular sonnet "His golde locks time hath to silver turn'd."



A pastoral play by Peele, *The Arraignment of Paris,* was written about 1581-2 and published in 1584. The idea of the play is the trial of Paris for error of judgment in giving the apple to Venus. Composed for the delectation of the court, it contended that in merit the ball belonged to one Eliza, who ruled over (says Diana)—

> **A kingdome that may well compare with mine,**
> **An ancient seat of kings, a second Troy,**
> **Y-compassed round with a commodious sea.**

In his earlier work, Peele's blank verse is ordinarily dash'd and brew'd with rhyme; yet he managed to get more music out of the metre than any earlier dramatist had done. His rhymed verse is sweet and caressing if somewhat monotonous. Beautiful songs now and again rise to the surface; in the third act of *The Arraignment,* for instance, where occurs—

> **Fair and fair and twice so fair,**
> **And fair as any may be,**
> **The fairest shepherd on our green,**
> **A love for any ladye.**

The dramatic work (if any) done by Peele between 1582 and 1590 remains to be identified. In the latter year he produced *The Old Wives' Tale,* printed five years later (1595), a strange, incoherent, and unmannerly medley, impossible as drama but interesting to the antiquary and the folk-lorist; interesting, too, by reason of its induction, its quaint tags of song, its supposed ridicule of Gabriel Harvey and his hexameters in the part of Huanebango, and its suggestions to Milton.[1] An eerie glimmer of romantic humour seems to be trying to percolate the dark

[1] Sacrapant and Delia in this play being the originals of Milton's Comus and Lady.

aisles of what is not so much a play as a pathless, plotless, and almost impenetrable forest. In 1599, a year or so after his death, was printed Peele's best-remembered play, *David and Bethsabe*. Peele's two editors differ in their estimate of *David and Bethsabe* ("beloved of German critics"). Dyce calls it Peele's *chef d'œuvre;* Bullen describes it as a mess of cloying sweets. It was very popular, but perhaps this was due to curiosity to witness Absalom swinging from a tree by his long hair (a suspension which cost manager Henslowe the sum of 1*s.* 6*d.* in ropes and pulleys). Both as regards smooth versifying and treatment of religious themes (often recalling the obsolete miracle poetry) a resemblance may be traced between Peele and Clement Marot, whose *Psaumes* were published in 1541-3. Peele's honeyed cadences may to a slight extent have modulated the verse-manner of Shakespeare during the early period from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *Romeo and Juliet;* but, upon the whole, he contributed less to dramatic progress in England than either Lyly, Greene, or Marlowe.

Thomas Kyd, the son of Francis Kyd, a scrivener, was baptised at St. Mary Woolnoth's, in Lombard Street, on November 6th, 1558. He was sent to Merchant Taylors' and educated above his profession of scrivener, which he soon deserted for literature. His accession to the ranks of professional writers, as usual, excited some jealousy, and Nash wrote in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* of those who, leaving the trade of *Noverint* whereto they were born, busy themselves with the endeavours of art, pose as English Senecas, attempt Italian translations or twopenny pamphlets, and blotch up a blank verse with ifs and ands. Of all these offences Kyd was guilty, although his blank verse is undeserving of such summary condemnation, and marks an advance on earlier efforts. But it was as a tragedian of blood that "sporting Kyd," as he was iron-



ically called, achieved his widespread fame. In or about 1588 he produced a play before which the popularity of even Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* paled. It was licenced in 1592 as *The Spanish Tragedie,* dealing with the pitiful fate of old Hieronymo, who goes well-nigh stark mad ere, in anticipation of Hamlet, he converts the stage into a shambles in the prosecution of his "revenge"; but the first extant edition is dated 1594, and another edition appeared in 1604, with extensive additions at the hand of Ben Jonson. Like *Titus Andronicus, The Spanish Tragedie* was a tale of horrors, in what we should now call transpontine taste, and, although it excited the enthusiasm of the vulgar, it was derided by the more cultured of its critics. The wits were fond of parodying it, and the strange soliloquy of the hero, "Beware, Ieronymo, go by, go by," became a regular catchword. A similar expression greatly in request among theatre-goers was "Hamlet, revenge!" the quotation being from a pre-Shakespearean play on the subject of the Prince of Denmark. Now in the prefatory Epistle, or Satire, which Nash contributed to his friend Greene's *Menaphon* in 1589, Nash makes the enigmatic remark in the course of a diatribe against Kyd that this dramatist could an he would furnish "whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls of tragical speeches." This looks very much as if Kyd were the author, or at least the reputed author, of this original *Hamlet,* written some twelve years before Shakespeare's great tragedy, probably about 1588. The resemblance between the *motif* of two such extraordinarily popular plays as *The Spanish Tragedie* and *Hamlet* is at any rate remarkable. Like *Hamlet,* the *Tragedie* represents an action of cruel and cold-blooded murder followed by a long-harped-on and sanguinary revenge. A ghost appears in both; in both the revenge is effected by means of a play within a play. Upon the same grounds the *Tragedie* resembles Marlowe's *Jew of Malta,*



in emulation of which play Professor Courthope thinks it was probably written.

Born on February 6th, 1564, the eldest son of a shoemaker at Canterbury, Marlowe [1] received the rudiments of his education at the King's School in that city, which he entered at Michaelmas, 1578, and where he had as fellow pupils Richard Boyle, afterwards known as the Great Earl of Cork, and Will Lyly, the brother of the dramatist. Stephen Gosson entered the same school a little before and William Harvey, the famous physician, a little after Marlowe. He subsequently went to Cambridge with a Parker scholarship from his school, and took his degree from Benet College (now Corpus Christi) in 1584. His classical acquirements were of a kind which was then extremely common, being based for the most part upon a minute acquaintance with Roman mythology as revealed in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. His spirited translation of Ovid's *Amores*, which was at any rate commenced at Cambridge, does not seem to point to any very intimate acquaintance with the grammar and syntax of the Latin tongue. Before 1587 he seems to have quitted Cambridge for London, where he attached himself to the Lord Admiral's company of actors under the leadership of Edward Alleyn, and almost at once began writing for the stage. Of Marlowe's career in London, apart from his four great theatrical successes, we know hardly anything. The licentious character of some of the young dramatist's tirades seems to have early sown a suspicion among the strait-laced that his

[1] He was christened at St. George's Church, Canterbury, February 26th, 1563-4, some two months before Shakespeare's baptism at Stratford-on-Avon. His father, John Marlowe, appears to have been the grandson of John Morley or Marlowe, a substantial tanner of Canterbury. He married on May 22nd, 1561, Catherine, daughter of Christopher Arthur, at one time rector of St. Peter's, Canterbury, who had been ejected by Queen Mary as a married minister.



morals left everything to be desired. It is probable enough that this attitude of reprobation drove a man of so exalted a disposition as Marlowe into a more insurgent attitude than he would have otherwise adopted. He seems to have dallied with Unitarian opinions, which were then regarded as putting a man outside the pale of civilised humanity, and the Privy Council were just on the eve of investigating some depositions against him when his career was abruptly and somewhat scandalously terminated. It appears that he surprised a woman whom he loved in the arms of his low-born rival, who is described as a serving-man. Carried away by anger, he drew his dagger with a view of making an end of his supplanter, but his adversary, a man of more muscle and greater agility, seized the blade, reversed it, and plunged it into his eye. This lamentable affray took place on June 1st, 1593, in a low tavern [1] at Deptford, in the register of the parish church of St. Nicholas in which town (where the poet sought refuge from the plague then raging in London) appears the following entry: "Christopher Marlowe, slain by Francis Archer."

A few months before the end of his life there is reason to believe that he transferred his services from the Lord Admiral's to Lord Strange's company, and was thus brought into direct communication with Shakespeare, who owed not a little, as we shall see, to the influence of his gifted predecessor.

To no single man does our drama owe more than to this ill-starred genius. It was he who determined the form which tragedy and history were permanently to assume. It was he who first clothed both in that noble and splendid garb which was ever afterwards to distinguish them. It

[1] Another version says that the *rixe* was a gambling affair and took place on board the *Golden Hind*, Drake's ship returned from encompassing the globe, and moored off Deptford as a popular draw, hired out to refreshment caterers.



was he who gave the death-blow to the old rhyme plays on the one side and to the frigid and classical unrhymed plays on the other. Before him the dramatist had found himself in this dilemma: he had either been divorced from poetry altogether or had been wedded to the fettering monotony of rhyme. Marlowe freed the fraternity from this Caudine Forks of which they felt the irksomeness without being able to discover the means of deliverance.

Marlowe's first play was *The Tragedy of Tamburlaine the Great,* produced at the close of 1587 and printed in 1590. Its avowed object was to revolutionise the drama, and its immediate effect has been compared to that produced by *Götz von Berlichingen* or *Hernani,* only in this case the war which Victor Hugo declared against classicism Marlowe declared against the

> **Jigging veins of rhyming mother wits**
> **And such conceits as Clownage keeps in pay.**

He astonished and alarmed old prejudices; he raised a violent storm among the critics against what they called "the swelling bombast of his bragging blank verse." It is true that a kind of blank verse had already been used in a limited number of plays (*e.g. Gorboduc, Jocasta,* and *The Woman in the Moon*); but it had not been so used on the popular stage, and even at the private houses where it had been used it had been employed in such a lifeless, formal, and mechanical way as to give no idea to any one that it could possibly have a future before it. It was the genius of Marlowe as displayed in *Tamburlaine* which transformed it at a single stroke into the noblest and most flexible of English metres. But the prejudices and the criticisms were soon dispersed before the gust of passion which Marlowe had infused into the drama. There was that in his diction and in his metre which proved irresistible to audiences so alive to new impressions as those



of that day. Marlowe was recognised as the reigning dramatist of his day, and the cause of the drumming blank verse was won.

The faults of *Tamburlaine,* it must be admitted, are both many and conspicuous. Like all works which react powerfully against tendencies of long standing, it is marked by a violence which is often crude and excessive. It has the defects of the revolutionary spirit; it is too sonorous; *over*-rhetorical; it is fierce, savage, raucous, and blatant. It displays an immense canvas on which all the figures are superhuman, while that of Tamburlaine himself towers like a giant in proportions of audacious impossibility. In successive scenes the reader is transported from Persia to Scythia, from Scythia to Georgia, and from Georgia to Morocco. The author seems intoxicated, as it were, with the fumes of his invention. He outlines his theme in immense contours, while the figure of his hero moves through the piece like an avalanche. The diction is no less grandiose than the subject of the drama. Marlowe ransacks the continent for a picturesque name, and pours the wealth of an empire into the lap of a single epithet.

Yet with all this rant and extravagance we believe that it is no exaggeration to say after Mr. Verity that *Tamburlaine* contained more genuine poetry than all previous dramas put together, from the first miracle play down to the last piece of rhymed fustian that Nash or Peele or Kyd happened to have produced.

It would have seemed impossible for the author of *Tamburlaine* to eclipse a piece so sensational and so novel in popular estimation. It is, nevertheless, the case that in a second tragedy he succeeded in throwing into stronger relief than ever his striking poetic genius, for his genius is essentially rather poetic than dramatic. Pre-eminently bold (it delighted him to "dally with interdicted sub-



jects") was his choice of material for his next play—the old story of the man's contract with the devil. He found a fine setting of the old fable ready to his hand. The story had crystallised round Dr. Faustus, who flourished in Thuringia about 1520, and whose doings were narrated in a popular story-book or *Faustbuch* published at Frankfort in 1587. The play which Marlowe founded upon the English translation of this popular legend is, like *Tamburlaine*, a succession of scenes rather than an organised dramatic structure. Faustus sells his soul to the devil in order to obtain a limited power for the space of twenty-four years, together with the services of one of Satan's lieutenants, Mephistopheles. Master of the elements and of all the forces of nature, he travels hither and thither about the globe, performing every kind of miracle. He goes to Rome, attends a banquet which is being given by the Pope, and, having assumed invisibility, snatches the dainties from the Pontiff's plate, and, when Papa crosses himself, boxes his ears. He plays similar tricks with friars and scholars, with the emperor, and with the princes of Germany. He then returns to his native Wittenberg, where he awaits his terrible fate in gradually intensifying anguish. He is revealed in his study with one bare hour to live.

The sublimity of the play is concentrated into this passage. At the close of it, upon the stroke of midnight, the demons enter to "bear him quick to hell." The *dénouement*, though bordering upon the grotesque, is sustained by lines of the truest poetical inspiration. The mighty line of Marlowe is nobly exemplified in the whole of the passage commencing

See! see! where Christ's blood streams in the firmament,

and ending with the terrible longing for annihilation which reaches the climax in



O soul, be chang'd into little water drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er to be found.

The play is disfigured by buffooneries. Faust and Mephistopheles are practically the only characters. There is no Gretchen,[1] and of the opportunities for symbolism or for irony which the play affords comparatively little use is made. Yet there are passages in it, such as the famous apostrophe to Helen or the discovery by Mephistopheles of the real meaning of Hell, which attain to the high-water mark of English poetry.

The third of Marlowe's tragedies, *The Rich Jew of Malta,* was probably produced in 1589, and as a dramatic composition exhibits a considerable advance. It is not known where Marlowe derived the material for his play. Its plot is of an extremely elaborate kind. It has for its subject the hatred of a Jew against his Christian persecutors. The early scenes, in which Barabas is depicted gloating over his gems, "infinite riches in a little room," in terms that constitute the very poetry of avarice, are as fine as anything that Marlowe ever wrote. But the cumulation of horrors and the exaggeration of the Jew's character, in which the semblance of humanity is sacrificed for the ravings of a devil incarnate, tend gradually to neutralise the human interest of the play.

During the last two years of his career Marlowe was jointly responsible for two plays on the civil wars of the fifteenth century known as the *First* and *Second Contentions* "betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster," printed in 1594 and 1595 respectively, and generally regarded as rough preliminary drafts of the Shakespearean dramas now known as the Second and Third Parts of *King Henry VI.* But Marlowe's greatest,

[1] "What has Margaret to do with Faust?" asked Lamb, loyal as ever to an old favourite. "A scene from Marlowe is worth Goethe's whole play."



and probably his last, effort in the direction of the chronicle drama was an unaided one. The noteworthy play entitled *The Troublesome Raigne and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England: with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer,* was registered for publication in July, 1593,[1] less than two months after Marlowe's death. As in the case of Shakespeare's historical plays, the facts are taken from Holinshed, with an occasional reference for a detail to Stow and Fabyan, and the chronology is severely compressed in order to enhance the dramatic effect. Structurally, this play is far superior to the skimble-skamble chronicles that had hitherto encumbered the English stage, and it forms a keystone of the arch of our historical drama. Its influence is very marked upon the *Richard II.* of Shakespeare and the other historical plays of that period. But it must be admitted that Marlowe lost almost more than he gained by his novel restraint in regard both to diction and structure. The play is almost wholly lacking in the lyrical fervour and extravagance of his earlier productions—though the old Marlowesque vein is seen now and again, especially in some of the earlier speeches of Gaveston (whose sinister influence forms the staple of the plot) and in the extreme physical horror of the ending—a foretaste of the most terrible kind of realism. The clownage which had been a foible of Marlowe's is altogether excluded. The result, unfortunately, is only to emphasise Marlowe's very defective powers of dynamic characterisation (the character of Isabella here, for instance, is wholly incoherent). The superiority of *Richard II.* in human and psychological interest is no less marked than the immense superiority of Shakespeare as a poet in the delicacy, subtle sadness, and rhythmical charm of those magnificent soliloquies in the closing acts of *Richard,* which have no counterpart whatever in the sheer animal distress of Edward.

[1] Quartos 1594 and 1598.



When all is said, however, *Edward II.* remains a pioneer work of a very noble design, and, as Schelling well remarks, "may be considered the final evolution of the tragic type of the English chronicle play."

What separates Marlowe from Shakespeare is his inability to individualise his characters. But there are not wanting indications in *Edward II.* which render it conceivable that, had he lived beyond his twenty-nine years, he might have stood second only to Shakespeare—far below him in humour and in power to depict men and women—yet possibly supreme in a different province of dramatic art. As it was, he was "the herald who dropped dead in announcing the victory, the fruits of which he was not to share."

The vivid success which attended the tragedies of Kyd and Marlowe gave the signal for the appearance of a very remarkable group of domestic tragedies in which the poetic element was wholly subordinated to the luridly realistic. These plays were based directly upon incidents which had occupied the pens of the Tyburn chroniclers of the period. Thus, on the murder of a London merchant near Shooter's Hill in 1573 was founded the anonymous tragedy of *A Warning for Fair Women.* On a murder of peculiar atrocity which occurred in Thames Street, Robert Yarrington founded his *Two Tragedies in One.* On the murder of two children by their father at Calverley, in Yorkshire, was founded *The Yorkshire Tragedy,* which appeared at the Globe in 1608, and was afterwards printed under the name of Shakespeare. The most famous of the group is the play based upon the murder of a Kentish gentleman in Edward VI.'s reign and entitled *Arden of Feversham.* In this play, which was printed in 1592, the character of the victim Arden is drawn in a faint and somewhat wavering outline, but the characters of his wife



Alice and her lover Mosbie, who contrived the murder between them, are full of individuality, and appallingly true to life. The guilty fears and suspicions with which Mosbie is haunted, the delicate and complex shades of sentiment in Alice, and the despairing passion by which she is consumed, reveal the work of a master in the delineation of character. The author, whoever he was, was the first to depict a complex woman character upon the tragic stage.[1]

[1] Works upon the early Elizabethan Drama have been greatly multiplied during the last fifteen years. To Dr. A. W. Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*, J. P. Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, and J. A. Symonds's *Predecessors of Shakespeare*, 1884, would now probably be added by general consent: F. S. Boas, *Shakspere and his Predecessors*, 1896; Mezières, *Prédécesseurs et Contemporains de Shakespeare*, 3rd ed. 1881; F. G. Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage*, 1890; Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, 1903; Manly, *The Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, 1897; Schelling, *The English Chronicle Play*, 1902; and Jusserand, *Histoire Littéraire*, vol. ii. chap. v. Of Lyly (upon whom we are expecting an elaborate monograph by Prof. Feuillerat, of Rennes), the recognised edition is that by R. Warwick Bond (1902). Kyd is edited by Prof. F. S. Boas (1901); Greene by A. Dyce, Dr. Grosart, and Prof. Churton Collins (Clarendon Press); Peele and Marlowe by Dyce, both of whose editions, good though they are, have been superseded by those of A. H. Bullen. For Marlowe may be consulted, further, Ingram's *Christopher Marlowe*, 1904; A. W. Verity's *Marlowe's Influence on Shakespeare*, 1886; Churton Collins's *Essays and Studies*, 1895; Swinburne's Essay in *Encyclopædia Britannica;* Seccombe and Allen's *Age of Shakespeare; Fortnightly Review*, September—October, 1905. It is an amusing exercise and test of critical ingenuity to trace the theories of Elizabethan staging as originally constructed upon very slender data by Nathan Drake, Malone, and J. P. Collier, and reflected in the ingenious reconstructions of Philarète Chasles (*La Représentation d'une Pièce de Shakespeare en 1613*), through the conjectures of F. G. Fleay, J. A. Symonds, H. B. Wheatley, William Archer, E. Bapst, W. W. Greg, F.



Reynolds (*Some Principles of Elizabethan Staging*), and Karl Mantzius (in his voluminous *History of Theatrical Art*), down to the elaborately circumstantial theories of the very latest German specialists, such as Dr. Brandl, Robert Prölss (*Altenglishes Theater*), and Cecil Brodmeier (*Die Shakespeare-Bühne*). As in the case with some Teutonic theories concerning Shakespeare's chronology and "Metrik," zeal occasionally outruns discretion, but both zeal and discretion alike seem distanced by prodigious learning.



CHAPTER VI

SPENSER AND HIS SCHOOL

"See in your library whether you have Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. No English is easier to understand, richer or more flowing; nowhere is there such an assemblage of abundant fiction, blissful imaginations, and marvellous adventures. It is like soaring on the wings of a beautiful swan; this aerial and fantastic world seems Man's natural home. It is like Ariosto, but serious, tender, touching, exalted, Platonican. It resembles in nowise Shakespeare's rapid, tormented, and dazzling Fairyland; it is perfectly calm, bright, and sweet. I shall endeavour to show this delight of Imagination, this beautiful madness of sixteenth-century poetry to our modern public fed on physiological novels."—TAINE, *Letters*.

Rhyme or classical metres—Gabriel Harvey—Edward Dyer—Two great metrical innovations—Edmund Spenser—*The Shepheard's Calender*—*The Faerie Queene*—Giles and Phineas Fletcher—Daniel—Drayton.

EVER since the "new learning" had begun to make way in England, English poetry had been mainly experimental and imitative. In the absence of any native literary tradition and of good and available English models, our writers had turned with a commendable humility to the reservoirs of the classics and to the more recent Italian masters. Wyatt and Surrey had followed the Italians; the more original Sackville had been influenced chiefly by Virgil. The writers of 1579 found themselves in the presence of developed literatures, with the formal perfection and maturity of which English literature could not bear comparison. They were oppressed by the superiority of Greek and Latin poetry; and in order to reproduce the merits of the classical poetry they thought that its prosody would first have



to be resurrected. It would not have been so very surprising had the development of poetry in England been injured and retarded—as it was deplorably retarded in France—by a too timid devotion to these models of antiquity.

Between 1570 and 1580 it was actually being debated whether rhyme should not be altogether discarded, and English poetry written for the future in metres consecrated by Greek or Latin usage. The question of the adaptation of English to classical metres was first raised by Roger Ascham in his *Scholemaster* of 1570.

Thomas Drant, a Cambridge man of a later generation, translated Horace's *Satires* and his *Ars Poetica* into classical metre, and when he died in 1578 left some elaborate posthumous rules whereby English might be twisted into quantitative measures such as sapphics and pentameters, but more especially hexameters. Ascham had found it absurd that such novices in poetry as the English should presume to follow the Goths in rhyming when they had before them the example of Homer and Virgil, the world's greatest poets, who knew not rhyme. William Webbe, the critic, likewise protested against "the tinkerly verse which we call rhyme," and the very lyrists themselves such as Thomas Campion denounced the practice as a concession to childish titillation. These various rules and admonitions were taken up very seriously by the group of poetical theorists who surrounded Sidney. Prominent among these were Gabriel Harvey and Sir Edward Dyer. Gabriel Harvey, a lecturer in rhetoric at Cambridge and author of various works in Latin, a man of genuine learning and not devoid of shrewdness and humour, is now mainly remembered for his devotion to this lost cause of classicism in English poetry. His counsels encouraged Sidney in the metrical experiments which diversified the *Arcadia*. The material service which he rendered to Spenser by intro-



EDMUND SPENSER



ducing him to Sidney's circle at Penshurst entitles him to our gratitude. His attempts to convert Spenser to his classical theory of versification had no lasting success. The poet was too polite to say what he thought about the practicability of moulding English pronunciation to suit the exigencies of metremongers; but after 1580, in which year he commenced *The Faerie Queene,* he ceased all experiments in classical metres, and, revolting definitely against Harvey's theories, resolved to work out his salvation as a metrist by an exclusive reliance upon his own poetic instinct.

Yet the classical doctrine was not lacking in some confessors and martyrs not by any means wholly devoid of poetical faculty, among them Sir Edward Dyer, Abraham Fraunce, John Dickenson, and Richard Stanyhurst.

Edward Dyer was born at Sharpham Park, near Glastonbury, in a house which was subsequently the birthplace of Henry Fielding. Both at Oxford and the court he was early marked out for distinction. He was the close friend and acted in 1586 as the executor of Sir Philip Sidney. Three years later he went on an embassy to Denmark, was subsequently knighted and made Chancellor of the Garter, died unmarried in 1607, and was buried in St. Saviour's, Southwark. Dyer was most highly reputed in his own day as poet, elegist, and staunch classicist, but he is remembered now exclusively by a single lyric.

Abraham Fraunce, a Salopian and St. John's, Cambridge, man, was emphatically a satellite of Sidney's, and one or two of his sonnets and other lyrics are included in the *Astrophel and Stella.* He also wrote *Arcadian Rhetoricke,*[1] and in 1591 issued *The Countess of Pembroke's Emanuell,* an account of the Nativity in rhyming hexam-

[1] The *Arcadian Rhetoricke* is notable from the fact that though published in 1598, it cites passages from *The Faerie Queene,* none of which was published until two years later.



eters. This was followed by *The Countess of Pembroke's Yvy Church* (two parts, 1591-2), which contains versions from Tasso, from the *Æthiopical History* of Heliodorus, and from Watson's Latin poem of *Amyntas*. Fraunce's attempts vary in success from prettiness to the most ludicrous doggerel.

More thorough-going than France, though unable to attain to the high prosodical ideas of Drant, was Richard Stanyhurst (1547—1618), an Irish gentleman whose ambition was roused to avoid barbarous rhyming by Ascham's indication of what true poetic excellence was in a quotation from a no longer extant[1] version of the *Odyssey* in English hexameters:

All travellers do gladly report great praise of Ulysses,
For that he knew many men's manners and saw many cities.

Stanyhurst's translation of the first four books of Virgil's *Æneid* into English hexameters is justly considered one of the curiosities of English literature. Inspired with an "hexameter fury," wrote Nash in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, this Stanyhurst "recalled to life whatever hissed barbarism hath been buried this hundred years . . . a pattern whereof I will propound to your judgments as near as I can, being part of one of his descriptions of a tempest, which is thus:

"Then did he make heaven's vault to rebound with rounce, robble hobble,
Of ruff raff roaring, with thwick thwack thurlery bouncing."

John Dickenson in his *Shepheardes Complaint* and also in the verses interspersed in his *Arisbas, or Cupids Journey to Hell*, a palpable imitation of *Euphues*, dated 1594, has recourse to classical metres, to hendecasyllabics, and to

[1] By his friend M. Watson, of St. John's, Cambridge.



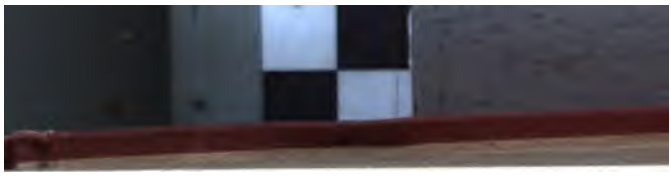
hexameters. While such experiments as these were occupying men's minds, while Webbe and Puttenham were descanting upon the elegance of verses shaped to the semblance of eggs and pillars, and when even a born lyrist such as Thomas Campion found it incumbent on him to denounce the vulgar and artificial custom of rhyming, the future of English poetry could hardly seem other than dark and perplexed; but little light was reflected on the past which could serve to illumine the future. From this impass English poetry was saved by two pieces of adaptation so striking and so successful as to rank among the highest of literary inventions. The first of these was Spenser's discovery of the stanza called after his name, an original modification and improvement of the Italian *ottava rima,* exceptionally fitted for the unwinding of romance, and adapted to show to the best advantage the melodious possibilities of English rhyme. The second was the adaptation of blank verse (which Surrey had attempted in his version of the *Æneid*) at the hands of Christopher Marlowe, before whom no one can be said to have realised even remotely the enormous possibilities of this unrhymed metre. The demand for English hexameters and sapphics, impracticable as it was, was thus not by any means wholly devoid either of meaning or of effect. It sprung from a sense of poverty in the old rhyming measures and led to the building up of forms of more complex beauty. More directly, though still for the most part unconsciously, it realised that for epic or serious dramatic poetry a real need for an unrhymed form of verse existed. This need, which was first expressed at Cambridge, gradually penetrated to the popular theatre, and the necessary relief from jigging rhyme was effectually found in the mighty line of Marlowe.

Edmund Spenser was born at East Smithfield, probably in 1552. His father, John Spenser, was a clothier of



Lancashire origin, and Edmund was sent when he was ten years old or thereabouts as a poor scholar to the newly founded Merchant Taylors' School; there he stayed till 1569, and had for his master the celebrated Dr. Mulcaster. In defiance of the classical prepossessions of the times, this distinguished scholar had the courage to say: "I love Rome, but London better; I favour Italy, but England more; I honour the Latin, but worship the English." The robust faith in the genius of his native tongue, which he derived from Mulcaster, may have enabled him to resist the heresies of his college friend, Gabriel Harvey, who became a fellow of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, about a year after Spenser entered the Hall as a sizar in April, 1569. But Harvey's theories, erratic as they were, probably did more in the end to quicken and stimulate than definitely to mislead Spenser's taste for poetry. Harvey probably rendered considerable service to Spenser by introducing him to the Leicester House circle. Spenser, on his part, was not ungrateful, as he shows in his *Eclogues*, where Harvey is Hobbinol. A common friend at Cambridge was Edward Kirke, who subsequently edited *The Shepheards Calender*.

Spenser left Cambridge, after taking the degree of M. A., in 1576. Soon after this he returned from a sojourn in Lancashire by the express advice of Harvey. About 1578, probably, he took up his abode at Leicester House in the Strand, as a poet in the favourite's household. In December, 1579, his famous collection of pastorals, *The Shepheards Calender*, was published, and immediately established Spenser's reputation. Next year he was made private secretary to Lord Grey de Wilton, recently appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland. Spenser went over to Ireland in August, 1580, and took part in the reduction of the fort at Smerwick, where some six hundred Roman Catholics, mostly Spaniards, who had effected a hostile



lodgment there, were slaughtered in cold blood. Lord Grey returned to England after this achievement, but Spenser remained on in Ireland, where his home was henceforth fixed, first in Dublin, and after 1588 at Kilcolman, where he bought, for a small sum, a forfeited estate, the castle in which he resided being an abandoned Peel-tower of the Desmonds. There he was visited by Raleigh, who urged him to bring to court the first three books of the fairyland romance which he was creating. He was presented to the Queen, published *The Faerie Queene* as far as it was completed in the spring of 1590, and in 1591, in answer to a good deal of grumbling about the hardships of his lot, and in spite of the opposition of Burleigh, received an annual pension of £50 from the Queen, with the informal title of "poet laureate." He returned to Ireland late in 1591, to resume his duties as Clerk to the Council of the province of Munster, which he resigned in June, 1594, upon his marriage in Cork Cathedral to Elizabeth Boyle, of an old Anglo-Irish family—the lady celebrated in the beautiful but somewhat artificial sonnets called *Amoretti*. He was in England again towards the end of 1595 bearing the MSS. of the fourth, fifth, and sixth books of *The Faerie Queene*. During 1596 he remained in London writing his drastic prose treatise called *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, embodying an uncompromising plan for the thorough subjugation of that rebellious country: his plan was not adopted, and when he returned to Kilcolman in 1597, he found to his cost that rebellion was still rife. Breaking into a flame in October, 1598, it took Spenser, the newly appointed Sheriff of county Cork, entirely by surprise. The castle, with one of the children in it, was burnt over his head, and he fled for refuge to Cork. While there the distressed poet wrote a plaintive appeal to the "mighty Empresse" and "dread Sovereign" Elizabeth "out of the ashes of desolation and



wasteness of this wretched Realm of Ireland" to "receive the voices of a few most unhappy ghosts." In the second week of December, Sir Thomas Norreys sent him with a letter to the Privy Council in England "manifesting the misery of the country." He reached London momentarily penniless, and died at a tavern in King Street, Westminster, on January 16th, 1599. He was buried in the neighbouring Abbey close to Chaucer, poets bearing his pall and casting verses into his grave.

Upon the appearance of *The Shepheards Calender* in 1579, "entitled" to Maister Philip Sidney and sped by some verses signed "Immerito," which reveal the signer at a glance, Spenser was acclaimed Parnassian, peer of Ariosto, and poet—our first since Chaucer; and the *Calender* recognised as the first poem for England to boast of since the days of John of Gaunt.

The title, as Warton was the first to point out, was borrowed from that of an old book first printed by Wynkyn de Worde, and reprinted on several occasions. A comical, odd book, Hearne called it, a strange medley of astrology and homely receipts, itself borrowed, in all probability, from an old French compilation called the *Kalendrier des Bergers*. Spenser's *Calender* is likewise a medley consisting of twelve compositions, alike called "Æclogues," and assigned to the twelve months of the year, but differing greatly in subject, metre, character, and excellence. It is very probable that they were written at different periods. The masquerade of shepherds, oaten pipes, and pastoral scenes is maintained throughout. In this Spenser was merely following the example borrowed by Virgil from the Greeks, revived by Petrarch and Mantuanus [1] (followed

[1] Baptista Mantuanus (1448—1516), a Carmelite monk of the Pagan Renaissance, who imitated Virgil with amazing cleverness. Love-plaint, singing bout, elegy, fable, satire, panegyric, and Sicilian landscape were all pressed into Im-



by Sannazaro, Guarini, and Tasso), and naturalised in England by Barclay and Googe. Spenser acquiesced in it, to the extent of uttering his thoughts through the mouths of imaginary shepherds and goatherds bearing homely, rustic names such as Diggon, Willy, and Piers. Colin Clout (adopted from Skelton) stands for Spenser himself, Hobbinol for Gabriel Harvey, Cuddie for Edward Kirke, Tityrus stands for Chaucer—

> Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled,

as Spenser later on described him—while Syrinx is Anne Boleyn, and Great Pan presumably Henry VIII. Thus, in its general scheme, *The Shepheards Calender* was quite conventional. Spenser had added little or nothing to the idea of the pastoral, and he had borrowed much. But he had followed no one model, and he had written eclogues in pure English matching anything written abroad. The experiment in versification was a triumphant success. There are passages in *The Shepheards Calender* of "poetical eloquence, of refined vigour, and of musical and imaginative sweetness, such as the English language had never attained to since the days of him who was to the age of Spenser what Shakespeare and Milton are to ours, the pattern and fount of poetry."

During the ten years following the appearance of the *Calender* Spenser resided mostly in Ireland, suffering the

merito's service in the form in which pastoralists had used them since Theocritus first sung, and Moschus lamented Bion. Spenser invented a Doric of his own, half rustic, half archaic (Chaucerian), which is justified to us by a quaint, sylvan music of its own. But those who knew not Chaucer looked askance at it, and Spenser used it more sparingly as he went along. Archaisms came to be shunned like the plague until Percy and Chatterton revived a taste with which Pope and Thomson, Prior and Shenstone had merely played.



loss of that society which made the age of Elizabeth so famous, but not apparently suffering in reputation. The hopes of literary England were directed towards him, nor were these hopes disappointed when in 1589 he returned to England and brought his sheaves with him in the shape of the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*. These three books were published early in 1590, and were dedicated to "the most, high, mighty, and magnificent empress, Elizabeth." The next three books appeared in 1596, and the first complete edition of Spenser's works in 1609 included two additional cantos belonging to some later book, presumably never completed. The whole poem, as originally planned, was to have been completed in twelve books of twelve cantos each. In a letter to Raleigh written in 1589, and prefixed to the first edition, Spenser describes the poem, the greater part of which has yet to be written, as a continued allegory or dark conceit. He goes on to give some information apparently intended to guide one in the obscurity. The general end of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline. "I labour," he says "to portray in Arthur before he was king the image of a brave knight perfected in the twelve private moral virtues as Aristotle hath devised. The which is the purpose of these first twelve books." The poet intended to reserve the central event, which was the occasion of all the adventures of the poem, till they had all been related, leaving them, as it were, "in the air" till at the end of twelve long books the reader should at last be told how the whole thing was originated, and what it was all about. He made the mistake of confounding the answer to a riddle with the resolution of a plot. As it is *The Faerie Queene* has no definite relation to the various stories and the stories have no definite relation to each other. The different knights have no very special connection with the virtues they are supposed to



represent, viz. holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, courtesy. To each virtue its own work; but the work of Spenser's knights is much the same in all cases. Britomart is not more chaste than Belphœbe or than Amoret. Sir Calidore is not more courteous than another. Sir Guyon is not extraordinarily remarkable for temperance.

The allegory is fully entitled to the epithet "dark" which Spenser bestowed upon it, yet it is much clearer in the first book than in any of its successors. From the point of view of the allegorist the lack of any real unity is a damning fault. Spenser, in fact, was not a parabolist, but a poet; and *The Faerie Queene* is not an allegory, but a dream, full of symbolism, and touched here and there throughout with allegorical import more or less definite. Hazlitt's advice under these circumstances is to leave the allegory severely alone on the ground that if you don't meddle with the allegory the allegory won't meddle with you.

Like so many great works whose fame may be said to have become constant and not variable, *The Faerie Queene* has yielded to assiduous analysis the secrets of those faults which now seem so patent to every beholder. It is written in the language which is "no language," [1] and it is concerned with an allegory which is no allegory. Its other faults may be reduced to a certain monotony, akin to that of the *Morte d' Arthur* and inseparable from the similarity of adventures appropriate to chivalric romance and the difficulty of differentiating purely mythical characters. Of the many beauties and excellences of the poem every generation from the date of its appearance has testified through the mouths of its choicest spirits. For Spenser

[1] "Affecting the ancients," said Johnson bluntly, "he writ no language"—inventing a more or less beautiful and appropriate jargon of his own.



has not been the poet of a school of singers, but the poet of all true poets from Dryden and Pope and Byron to Milton, Keats, and Wordsworth.

It is significant that many of his best appreciators in modern times have regarded him less and less as a great thinker, allegorist, or justifier of the ways of God to man, and more and more as a metrical musician, and, above all, as a painter of scenes who, with the imaginative opulence of a literary Turner, has furnished a whole gallery of his own with the stuff that dreams are made of. One of his finest appreciators, Leigh Hunt, in his *Imagination and Fancy,* has dwelt almost exclusively upon this word-painting side of his genius. Spenser was in fact "the great painter." The personages in *The Faerie Queene* are not so much characters as richly coloured figures, moving to the accompaniment of delicious music in an atmosphere of serene remoteness from the earth. Not until Keats did another English poet arise so filled with a passion for outward shapes of beauty, so exquisitely alive to all impressions of the senses. In narrative, description, in movement, and in action Spenser is inferior to his immediate model, the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. But in effects of richness, of gloom, or of mystery, or in the projection of allegoric figures perfect in beauty or in ugliness, he is almost unapproached. And above all, great painter that he is, he excels in atmosphere, an atmosphere of dreamland, silvery and pure and faint and mysterious as moonlight, in which the figures of his noble knights and maidens shine with an unearthly beauty.[1]

[1] To those who would seek to penetrate his philosophy, Spenser would seem at first sight to reflect from a full surface the luxuriance and many-sided culture of the Renaissance. But Spenser does not really typify Renaissance ideas any more than he represents the dominant Drama and Lyric of his day. He is in a way far more modern, the moralising temper,



As compared with the style of his earlier work, that of *The Faerie Queene* is a good deal more matured than that of *The Shepheards Calender*. Spenser was the first and one of the finest of our student poets, and his style was quite traceably elaborated by the study of his greatest predecessors in England, such as Chaucer, Malory, and Sackville, and by the practice of imitation and translation from the choicest Italian poets in vogue—Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Mantuan, Sannazaro, and last but not least from the French of Clement Marot. He was, moreover, a great lover of antiquities, and certainly projected if he did not write a work on Irish archæology. This zealous antiquarianism found expression in the archaic diction which he adopted in the first instance partly as a make-weight against the Latinising tendency which was sapping the foundations of the vernacular, partly to compass a Chaucerian and old-world rusticity appropriate to a bucolic almanac such as *The Shepheards Calender;* but the ruggedness of this language was considerably modified in *The Faerie Queene,* where he adopted his archaisms more sparingly and deliberately with a view to securing definite artistic effects of colour, depth, and cadence. In *The*

the seriousness and melancholy of later Anglo-Saxon temperament being powerfully represented in his work. If he is the poet of Catholic chivalry, it is of a chivalry which has lost its ancient simplicity and become clouded by the abstractions of Protestant Platonism. The religious symbolism, too, though mediæval in origin, is complicated and embittered by the intrusion of religious party spirit. The fact is not to be supposed or concealed, that in poetry, too, as well as in religion, the old moorings were by way of being lost. With many a lingering look the poet leaves the light and warmth of the Mediterranean, the tradition of Holy Church and Roman Empire, and with the aspirations of Tudor England to fill his sails (upon which the radiance of the southern sun is still reflected), and with the Reformation to serve him as rudder, sets a new course for the ideal across the trackless waves of Futurity.



Faerie Queene are visible also the resources of much wider reading and closer observation of nature than in his previous work, and there is throughout a much greater luxuriance of colour, imagery, and mythology. As with other poets of his time, pre-eminently Tasso, the gods and heroes of antiquity glide continually across the vistas of his strange, enchanted forest, in which we wander ankle deep in the yielding moss of heroic allegory.

But it is perhaps specially in the music of metre that the greatest definite advance is to be noted. The predominant metrical instrument of the *Calender* (apart from the old five-foot heroic line, which is most splendidly handled by Spenser) was an accentual line of four beats, an old measure which derived new lustre from the brilliant use of it made in after times by Chatterton, Blake, and Coleridge. The stanza of *The Faerie Queene* is one of Spenser's own invention, a metrical creation of the first order, manipulated with consummate skill. The Spenser stanza, says Professor Courthope, is plainly "a development of the eight-lined ballad strophe first introduced by Chaucer from France. This consisted of two quatrains with three sets of rhymes, the quatrains being connected with each other by a common rhyme in the fourth and fifth lines, thus, *a b a b b c b c.*" To this measure Spenser gave a new movement by adding an Alexandrine rhyming with the sixth and eighth lines, thus, *a b a b b c b c c,* thus greatly enhancing the effect of the *ottava rima,* which his stanza otherwise resembled, by avoiding the somewhat mechanical snap of the finial double rhyme.[1]

"With such a metre, and such a lexicon, marvels in verbal music become almost easy. Hardly any two stanzas of this enormous work will be found exactly to repeat each

[1] A somewhat similar use of the Alexandrine to set off the decasyllabic line is seen in a poem by Ferrers in *The Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth Castle.*



other in cadence. The secrets of varying the cæsura of the line, and of using or abstaining from *enjambement* or overlapping, which have been by turns ignored, recovered, and abused, and on which rests practically the whole art of rescuing any metre from monotony, were perfectly well-known to Spenser, and as cunningly used by him as by any of his followers. Nor can he be said to be ignorant, though he employs them rather less, of the other two great metrical secrets, the use of trisyllabic feet and the distribution of words of varying weight and length over the line." [1]

The great success of the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* induced the publisher to apply to Spenser for material for a further volume. This appeared early in 1591, entitled *Complaints,* forming a collection of nine miscellaneous poems. Of these *Muiopotmos, or The Fate of the Butterfly,* swept by a gust of wind into a spider's web, is a delightful exercise of lyrical fancy (admirably criticised by Lowell); *The Ruines of Time* is an elegiac tribute to the Countess of Pembroke, lamenting the deaths of Sidney, Leicester, and Warwick; *The Teares of the Muses,* a lament upon the low state of learning in England; while the vigorous though desponding *Mother Hubberd's Tale,* perhaps the most direct of Spenser's writings, contains a poignant satire in decasyllabic couplets upon certain aspects of the English court.

Other fragments of Spenser's early work, a volume of *Stemmata Dudleiana* and a poem to which several references are made called *The Dying Pelican,* were never recovered. On Sidney's death in 1586 the most poetic of the innumerable elegies, albeit highly artificial and somewhat conventional in its decorations, was naturally Spenser's *Astrophel: A Pastoral Elegie.* In 1594 his *Amoretti*

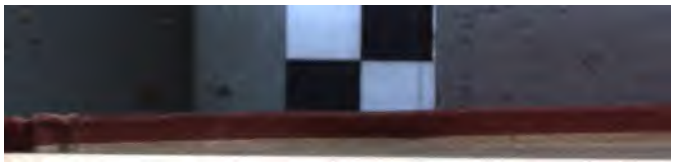
[1] Saintsbury, *A Short History of English Literature,* 2nd ed., p. 269.



and *Epithalamion* went to Ponsonby for publication. The sonnets are rather disappointing in their lack of individuality, but the *Epithalamion* (written in alternately rhyming decasyllabics), which crowns the series of *Amoretti,* is perhaps the most splendid hymn of triumphant love in the language. In 1595 appeared *Colin Clout's come Home Againe,* a fascinating narrative of his journey to court and what he saw there, written immediately upon his return to Kilcolman in 1591. His next visit to London in 1596 saw the issue of his *Four Hymns* in praise of love and beauty, heavenly love and heavenly beauty. The most stately and noble of these—characteristic, too, in its union of intellectual and sensual rapture—is the second hymn, in honour of beauty, the one worship of Spenser's life. Later in the year he published his *Spousall Verse* or *Prothalamion* in honour of the double marriage of the Earl of Worcester's daughters, written in a beautiful measure of his own devising and full of the most enchanting melody.

Among the disciples and imitators who followed Spenser into fields allegorical or pastoral, the two most noteworthy were the two Fletchers, Giles and Phineas.

Giles Fletcher, "equally beloved of the Muses and of the Graces," came of a poetic stock. His father was Dr. Giles Fletcher, author of *Licia;* his elder brother Phineas wrote *The Purple Island;* and his cousin John was the dramatic partner of Francis Beaumont. Born about 1587, he spent full fifteen years among the colleges of his dearly loved Cambridge, was one of the long line of spiritual teachers who have filled the Church of St. Mary's, and quitted this sphere only toward the end of his life for the lonely vicarage of Alderton, on the Suffolk coast, where his death in 1623 is said by Fuller to have been hastened by "melancholy." His only literary work of importance was a poem entitled *Christ's Victorie and Triumph in Heaven and Earth, Over and After Death,* which was dedicated to the



Master of Trinity and published at Cambridge in 1610. This is a religious epic in four books and 2,100 lines, dealing with the Redemption, and containing passages (such as those describing Satan as an aged sire slowly footing in the silent wilderness and the temptation of Jesus in the goodly garden and in the Bower of Vain Delight) which it is evident that Milton used with profit in the second of his great epics. The poem is diversified by lyrical measures, but is written for the most part in a modified Spenserian stanza, a stanza considerably injured, however, by the omission of Spenser's seventh line. He retains Spenser's allegorical method and many of his archaic mannerisms. But the work is too sincere and too genuinely reverent to be spoiled by literary affectation. It is not primarily a literary exercise but a long labour of love by a man of marked literary talent, ingenious and cultivated and of some imagination.

Phineas Fletcher, the elder of the two brothers, also took orders and died rector of Hilgay, in Norfolk, in 1650. The best remembered of his numerous poems is *The Purple Island,* not published before 1633 but written many years earlier, probably early in the reign of James I., upon whom a good deal of the usual adulation is heaped. Spenser and Virgil are avowedly the models, and the poem is written in a debased Spenserian stanza of seven lines. The allegory is much more methodical than that of *The Faerie Queene.* The Purple Island is the body of Man with its three metropolitan cities, the Brain, the Heart, and the Liver, in which rise the great rivers of the Blood. The anatomy and physiology of the island having been treated at great length, its occupants, the intellectual and moral faculties of Man, are similarly personified, and in the last two cantos the virtues and vices are marshalled in hostile array and we have a grand battle!

The quaintness and pedantry of this amazing poem are



apt to disguise its better qualities; but the personifications are often noble, the style is vigorous and antithetical, the phrasing frequently happy and strong.

Leaving Spenser's allegorical school for the time, we come to the chief of his pastoral imitators, William Browne (1591—1643), a native of Tavistock, of a good Devonian family, who was educated at Exeter College, married a lady of some means, and quitting the Temple about 1616, lived thenceforth a retired life in the country. He followed Spenser's *Calender* very closely in his *Shepheard's Pipe,* a series of seven eclogues in varying metre. But Browne's chief work was *Britannia's Pastoralls,* the value of which consists just in this, that with an easy and simple charm of manner he sets before us the pleasant things of real country life. Like his master, he introduces into his *Arcadia* a large number of river-gods, well-gods, dryads, and nymphs from the same sources of classical inspiration, Theocritus, Moschus, Virgil, and Ovid, as well as their Italian imitators. The conventionality of this species of decoration gives to all these seventeenth-century pastorals a detestably suburban air; yet Browne generally appreciated the country, while as for his own West Country he loved it as a true poet should, and celebrated the beauty of those rivers whose very names are musical:

> The Walla, Tamar, Tavy, Exe, and Tau,
> The Torridge, Otter, Ockment, Dart, and Plym—

with the same devotedness that impelled Burns to "cock the crests" of neglected Ayrshire streams.

To the same pastoral flock belong the obscure and belated Elizabethan, William Basse (1583—1653), whose pastoral elegies or eclogues and *Polyhymnia,* written about 1623, remained in manuscript for over 250 years, and John Dennys, author of the curious but unaffected poem on *The Secrets of Angling,* 1613. From disciples of the school of



Spenser, such as the pastoral lyrists Breton and Wither, the Platonist Henry More, and the romantic author of *Pharonnida,* William Chamberlayne, calling for notice elsewhere, we can pass without any great dislocation to a group of writers who combine the pastoral and allegory with metrical history and topography in poems of truly monumental proportions. Their vastness has caused them to be mistaken for prehistoric abodes of the dead rather than monuments of the living. Drayton, Daniel, and Warner,[1] have indeed been not unhappily described as the saurians of English poetry. It is true that they did not approach in prolixity *The Sacred Warre* of W. Barret, an epic of 68,000 lines which failed to find a publisher even in the reign of James I., and still remains in manuscript. Yet the metrical histories of Daniel and Drayton are both designed upon a truly colossal scale.

Samuel Daniel, the son of a music-master, was born near Taunton in 1562. He entered Magdalen Hall, Oxford, in 1579, but "his geny being more prone to easier and smoother studies than in pecking and hewing at logic," he left Oxford degreeless in 1582, and after travel in Italy settled down as a tutor under the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke; this was exchanged about 1587 for a Yorkshire home as tutor in the Clifford family. His sonnet cycle in praise of *Delia,* 1592, was warmly hailed by Colin Clout, and a second edition minutely revised soon appeared with the addition of an "historical" narrative piece, *The Complaynt of Rosamond,* written in the metre of Shake-

[1] William Warner (1558—1609), gave the world in 1584 *Pan, his Syrinx or Pipe Compact of seven Riedes,* and five years later completed his metrical history of the world from the Flood to Flodden Field. *Albion's England,* as it was called, reached a seventh edition in 1612, and ruined the sale of *The Mirror for Magistrates.* Its interminable couplets (fourteen syllables to each line) are not often disturbed at the present day.



speare's *Lucrece.* In 1594 appeared his rhymed Senecan tragedy, *Cleopatra,* in which the Egyptian enchantress moralises on her own fall through some 200 lines. In 1595 were issued the first four books of his bulky historical epic, *The Civile Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York,* completed in eight books in 1609, when it numbered upwards of 7000 lines. On Spenser's death he seems to have succeeded in his position as a so-called "volunteer laureate." Early in the reign of James, whose advent he celebrated in a *Panegyric Congratulatorie,* he was made one of the grooms of the privy chamber to Queen Anne, who took great delight in his conversation. From the commencement of the new reign Daniel was drawn in to bear a share in the court festivities, and his best art was shown in the fourth and last of his masques or pastoral tragi-comedies, entitled *Hymen's Triumph.* His rhyming is sweet, his language stately and copious, inclining always, however, rather to the neutral ground of prose and verse. For some reason or other Daniel appears to have been dissatisfied with the recognition that he obtained at court and among the lettered. He turned husbandman, and, as Fuller says, devoted himself to the practical exposition of the *Georgics.* "I question whether his Italian will fit our English husbandry." He died in his native Somerset, at Ridge Farm, Beckington, on October 14th, 1619. His old pupil, Lady Anne Clifford, put up a tablet to his memory in the parish church. His *Whole Workes* were collected in 1623.

His good qualities are evidenced in the epithet which has become his by right of prescription—"well-languaged" Daniel. And this epithet is well earned by a kind of familiarity in his rhythm and his phrasing, a familiarity which makes his language seem almost modern to us as compared with that of some of his greater contemporaries. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge are loud in praise of his



pure and natural language. Coleridge wrote letters imploring Lamb to try to appreciate Daniel better than he did, and Lamb responded by including a passage from *Hymen's Triumph* in his specimens of the English dramatists. Though his verse lacks colour and emotion, it has great beauty of line, together with a lucidity and a serenity that do occasionally soar into the region of the majestic.

Daniel was outshone by a very near neighbour in the realm of poesie, one who combined his own studious zeal for verse-making with a double share of poetic fibre, Michael Drayton. The grandson of a well-to-do Warwickshire butcher, who dwelt at Atherstone, Michael Drayton was born at Hartshill, Warwickshire (a quarry-village in which his cottage was aptly "discovered" some fifty years ago), in 1563. As a youth he seems to have been attached to the Goodere family of Polesworth, in the capacity of "a proper goodly page." At Polesworth he studied side by side with Sir Henry Goodere, a good friend in later years of Jonson and Donne, and himself the author of a few courtly fragments of verse. It seems possible that this generous patron may have maintained him for a time at one of the universities; Drayton's muse is certainly not of the unlearned order. In the old convent buildings, upon which the hall was engrafted, he doubtless romped with one of the daughters of the house, the fair Anne Goodere, by whom, and no other, it is pretty certain that the sonnets of Drayton's *Idea* were inspired. Nor is the epithet "fair" a merely conventional one, for the physician of the family, John Hall, who married Shakespeare's daughter Judith, expressly calls her a beauty. Two years later, in 1595, she married Sir Henry Rainsford, and the inference seems irresistible that it was the parting between the poet and his old playmate and literary mistress which occasioned that wonderful sonnet, "Since there's no help—come let us kiss and part." This was not published until 1619,



but it must have been written, we feel sure, a good many years before this. The pastorals of 1593 were called *Idea, The Shepheards Garland,* fashioned in "nine eglogs," written on the model of Spenser's *Calender*. Like so much of Drayton's work, they were subsequently refashioned, and the beautiful daffodil song—

> **Gorbo, as thou cam'st this way**
> **By yonder little hill,**
> **Or as thou through the field didst stray**
> **Saw'st thou my Daffadil?—**

one of the most fragrant of Drayton's lyrics, was enwrought in the ninth eclogue of the 1606 version. Drayton's power of song was of distinctly slow growth.

In 1594, after the *Astrophel and Stella* and *Delia* sonnets, it was hard for a poet not to be inditing of these matters. The result was the fifty-one "Amours in Quatorzains" of Drayton's *Ideas Mirrour* (of which there were recensions in 1599, 1602, 1605, 1619). Much of this work consisted in framing and glazing French adaptations from the Italian against the rigours of the English climate.

Drayton's next venture was the most popular appeal that he made to his contemporaries; this was his *Englands Heroicall Epistles,* published in 1597. Obtaining a hint from Ovid's *Heroides* for the stories of historical amours, he imparted to them a richness of declamation and a Marlowesque vigour which is foreign to most of his work. And sounding though the verse is, it is written in heroic couplets of a smoothness that seems often to anticipate that of a much later period. In 1603, though an elaborate panegyric which he prepared for the reception of James was repulsed, he became an esquire to Sir Walter Aston, and found a pleasant haven of retreat in time of need at his seat of Tixall, in Staffordshire. It was thus in somewhat restored circumstances that he published in 1606 his *Poemes Lyric*



and Pastoral: Odes and Eglogs. Some of the odes, which are written in strophes of Drayton's invention, are among the finest things he wrote, and a place is found among them for that stirring ballad of *Agincourt,* the fine flower of old patriotic lyric. It was based with great skill upon some fragments of a much more ancient ditty, and it was sedulously revised and improved by Drayton during his lifetime. Heywood imitated it in his *Edward IV.;* Tennyson took it for the prototype of his *Charge of the Light Brigade,* but he has not succeeded in surpassing his model. Like Shakespeare's *Henry V.,* it must have had a powerful effect in focussing attention upon triumphs as remote from that day as Blenheim and Ramilies are from the present.

On happy Crispin day
Fought was this noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
To England to carry:
O! when shall Englishmen
With such acts fill a pen,
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?

In his historical *Legends* (Piers Gaveston, Matilda, Robert of Normandy, 1593-6) Drayton reverted to the influence of Daniel, and the motive of the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the great ones of the earth, which had so often done duty in our literature from Chaucer and Lydgate to *The Mirror for Magistrates.* The first poem that he planned on a large scale was *Mortimeriados,* 1596, republished with radical alterations, including a change from seven-line stanza to *ottava rima,* and with a new title, *The Barrons' Wars,* in 1603. It forms an epic narrative in 3,600 lines of the events of the reign of Edward II., ending with the retributive overthrow of Mortimer and Isabella by Edward III.



For twenty full years from 1598 off and on Drayton was working diligently at his *Poly-Olbion,* or a chorographical description of all the tracts, rivers, mountains, forests, and other parts of Great Britain, of which he issued eighteen songs or cantos in 1613. This famous topography, which is for the most part a sufficiently tedious and prosaic recapitulation of Camden and Leland in fourteen-syllable verse, is encased in a thin film of personification and antique legend. A stern patriot alone could have finished such a work. Drayton must have been glad to see the thirtieth and last song printed in 1622. Meanwhile in 1619 he collected into a small folio all the poems with the exception of the *Poly-Olbion* that he wished to preserve, and added some new lyrics. In 1627 he brought out a fresh volume of miscellaneous poems, two somewhat dreary metrical chronicles (*The Battaile of Agincourt* and *The Miseries of Queen Margarite*), *The Shepherd's Sirena,* and the daintily imagined and quaintly comic fairy tale the *Nymphidia,* telling how Oberon, king of the fairies, and the valiant Pigwiggin, mounted on earwigs, helmeted with beetle-heads, sworded with hornets' stings, with cockle-shell shields and armour of fish scales, fought for the love of Queen Mab, and were cured by the waters of Lethe. Of equal charm with this Lilliputian extravaganza, which has left a little wake of its own in the history of English poetry, are some of the verses in *The Muses' Elysium* included in his last volume, published in 1630. The poet had imitated all round, tried every kind of measure, and put his lips to every kind of mouth-piece from the bassoon to the flute. In these pastoral dialogues of his last years, he blossomed out in a manner which showed that he had fathomed the resources of this species of art, borrowing the tones and the cadences of a later generation, while he kept, not wholly free indeed, but fully *as* free from the affectation which is the bane of the pastoral as his old master,



Colin Clout. He died in Fleet Street, about one hundred yards east of Temple Bar, in December, 1631, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His property was assessed at £24 2*s.* 8*d.*

Drayton practises almost every kind of verse measure: sextain, rhyme royal, sonnet, Italian octave, heroic couplet, short-lined ode, octo-syllabic couplet, dithyrambic, and alexandrine. He was not a master either of rhythm or metre, and, like most of the poets of the day other than song-writers or dramatists, he understood his models imperfectly. But he wrote an enormous amount of verse, and success came to him fitfully, yet once or twice without stint:

> Near to the silver Trent
> Sirena dwelleth,
> She to whom Nature lent
> All that excelleth.

In the generations from Milton to Goldsmith, Drayton seems to have completely dropped out of poetic memory; but although Goldsmith asked who he was, an attempt had already been made at reparation in a fairly complete edition of his works published in 1748. Lamb and Coleridge did much to enforce his claim, and Southey thought sufficiently well of his *Poly-Olbion* to include the whole of it in his selections from the British poets in 1831. Rossetti wrote exuberantly of the sonnet "Since there's no help" as almost the best in the language, if not quite.[1]

[1] Spenser's influence upon our poetic literature has been profound. He has left his mark upon Milton, Bunyan, Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The eighteenth century produced some Spenser scholars, notably John Hughes, Thomas Birch, Thomas Warton, and Henry John Todd, whose edition in 8 vols., 1805, is still a standard work. Dr. Johnson, writing in *The Rambler*, in 1751, lamented that imitation of Spenser was corrupting the age. He referred to the experiments of Thomson and



Shenstone in the Spenserean stanza, attempts which were soon to be indefinitely multiplied. To Byron, Shelley, and Keats in particular (for to Keats "Spenser revealed the secret of his birth"), the attraction of Spenser's stanza proved irresistible. Among later devout worshippers at Spenser's romantic altar, observe Coleridge, Scott, Southey, Hazlitt, Campbell, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, "Christopher North," Rossetti, and Tennyson. Landor is one of the few singers to whom Spenser appeared tedious; even he was sufficiently attracted to devote two Imaginary Conversations to the author of *The Faerie Queene.*

Spenser's *Works* were first collected in 1611. Since the annotated editions of Hughes (1715), and that of Todd in 1805, the most elaborate editions are those of Prof. F. J. Child, Boston, 1855, J. P. Collier, 1862, and Dr. Grosart, in 10 vols., 1880-82. A desirable one-volume edition is that issued by Routledge (1850), though this is superseded as regards the Memoir by the Globe edition, 1899 (small print). An excellent edition of *The Faerie Queene* in six slim volumes is that of Miss Kate M. Warren,* 1897-9 (Constable). Students will also obtain Warton's *Observations on The Faerie Queene* (1752, 1762), Craik's *Spenser and his Times*, 3 vols., 1845, R. W. Church's *Spenser*, 1879, in the Men of Letters Series, and Professor Herford's edition of *The Shepheards Calendar*,* 1895. Of essays introductory to the study of Spenser, Leigh Hunt's selections and critical notice in his *Imagination and Fancy*,* Lowell's Essay on Spenser in *English Poets*,* and Professor Courthope's chapter on "Court Allegory: Edmund Spenser" (*History of English Poetry*, vol. ii, 234-87) are the most suggestive. F. I. Carpenter's *Outline Guide to Study of Spenser* (1894) is also useful. Of William Browne a desirable edition is that by Gordon Goodwin (Muses Library). Of Drayton there are *Selections*, ed. Bullen, 1883, and a fuller volume promised, ed. A. R. Waller; and see *Michael Drayton: A Critical Study* by Professor Elton, 1905. Daniel has been edited by Dr. Grosart for the Huth Library in 3 vols., 1887.

One of the least admirable moulds created by Greek art for Elizabethan copyists was the Didactic Poem. The *Works and Days* of the Bœotian Hesoid had a most remarkable echo in the early Elizabethan *Five Hundred pointes of good Husbandrie as well for the Champion or Open Countrie as also for the Woodland or severall, mixed in everie month with Huswiferie*, which was in course of enlargment from 1557 to 1580. Its



author, Thomas Tusser, an Essex man (Rivenhall), choir-boy at St. Paul's, an Etonian under the bloodthirsty Udall, and a scholar of King's, Cambridge (1543), tried his hand at husbandry near Witham, but died in London May 3rd, 1580, and was, appropriately enough, buried in the Poultry, Cheapside. His work is a kind of agricultural Sternhold and Hopkins, with admixture of proverbs and old saws in the old nursery rhyme measure of "eight and six" (as Quince calls it), Skeltonics, and rude anapæsts:

> Go wash well, saith Sommer, with sunne I shall drie,
> Go wring well, saith Winter, with winde so shall I. . . .
> One dog for a hog, and one cat for a mouse,
> One ready to give is enough in a house. . . .
> Where window is open, cat maketh a fray,
> Yet wilde cat with two legs is worse by my fay. . . .
> Where hens fall a-cackling, take heed to their nest,
> Where drabs fall a-whisp'ring, take heed to the rest. . . .

Two later and more ordinary didactic versifiers were Greville and his congener, Sir John Davies. Schoolmate of Sidney at Shrewsbury, Sir Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke) wrote his friend's life or eulogy in a fine specimen of ornate prose. He was a jealously guarded favourite of the Queen, but retained the favour of James, and wrote long-winded didactic poems (in *a b a b c c* metre) on "Humane Learning," "Fame and Honour," and "War"; they are caviare to the general, and Hazlitt accused Lamb of liking them because no one could understand them. Two dramas deal similarly with problems of political science. His "sonnets" are unlike any other sonnets. Greville was stabbed by a servant in 1628, and his poems appeared in 1633, posthumously, and in the same year with George Herbert's. Sir John Davies (1567—1626), a distinguished lawyer and judge of excellent family, wrote in seven-line stanza a curious poem (*Orchestra*, 1596) on the musical motion of all things in a dance of love, and another graver poem called *Nosce Teipsum*, which he couched in the long elegiac quatrains rendered famous by Dryden and Gray.



CHAPTER VII

SONNETEERS, SONG-WRITERS, AND MINOR VERSIFIERS

"To describe a thing of no account we say sometimes that it is 'not worth an old song.' When you come to think of it, how few things are!"

Sir Philip Sidney—The fashion of sonneteering—Elizabethan lyrics and music—Lyly, Nash, Greene, Lodge, and Breton—Campion—Barnfield—Browne—Wotton.

THE fashion of sonneteering in England was really set by Sir Philip Sidney, over a hundred of whose sonnets, under the title of *Astrophel and Stella,* were circulated in no less than three separate editions during 1591. The notion of sonnets and sonnet-writing was already fairly familiar in England. Both Wyatt and Surrey had turned Italian *canzone* into irregular sonnet forms. Googe, Turberville, and others had produced so-called "sonnets"; Thomas Watson devoted the close and unintermittent labour of a zealous literary amateur to pouring the original wine of Petrarch out of French into English bottles. The sonnet was at this time scarcely regarded as a definite literary form, but rather as a synonym for a conventional love poem in eulogy of a mistress. It is in this sense that Shakespeare uses the word in his early comedies. The outward form of the sonnet, and its special applicability to court and complimentary usage, were soon better understood; but we still hear of six-line and eighteen-line sonnets (Breton's "Pretty twinkling starry eyes" is called *Sonnet,* and so is Wither's "Shall I, wasting in despair," as late as 1615); and, indeed, it is not until we get to



Drummond and Milton that the technicalities and exigencies of the sonnet as a verse form can be said to have engaged the study of competent poetical scholarship. Sidney's sonnets were probably written for the most part in 1581, within half a dozen years, that is to say, of the appearance of two of the largest and most popular sonnet collections in France—those of Ronsard and Desportes. The sonnet was soon flourishing in the English court as a delicate exotic. Then in 1591 Sidney's sonnets were published, and even thus transplanted to a ruder atmosphere, it seemed for a time as if the sonnet were going to flourish rankly. From 1591 to 1598 nearly every year witnessed the appearance of three or four competing sonnet series. Most of these volumes were highly frigid and artificial, and it is mainly to the fact that Shakespeare himself was for a time captivated by the passing craze that we owe our interest in such productions. Several isolated sonnets by Drayton and others are of a rare finish and perfection; but as regards collections, after the unapproachable 154 sonnets of Shakespeare, the collection of Sidney's entitled *Astrophel and Stella* has probably the most intrinsic interest; while to the literary historian, both as a pioneer effort and as enshrining the romance of the Bayard or the Hirosé of English letters, *Astrophel and Stella* must always make what is perhaps a disproportionately strong appeal.

In 1575, at Chartley, Philip Sidney first met Penelope Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex. She was then only about thirteen, while Sidney was a young man of twenty-one, lately returned from the Continent with his head full of "serious" imaginings and ambitious dreams. He was a favourite of the Earl of Essex, and, as presumptive heir to the Leicester estates, a highly eligible *parti*. It was perfectly natural, therefore, that the project of marriage should have been entertained between the youthful heiress and the gallant but impecunious courtier. And there



seems no doubt that some such scheme was broached, and that the initiative was taken not by Sidney (who was consumed at this time not so much by love as by love's antidote—ambition) but by the relatives of the lady. Early in 1581, however, Penelope was hastily married to a well-endowed *roué,* Lord Rich, and then at last Sidney discovered the passion which had apparently been smouldering for some time, and found himself in the position of one who realises the depth of his love for a woman only when he is bound in honour to fight against his desire. Sonnets written for the most part during his forced retirement from court in 1581 represent a summer thundercloud of sentiment tinted by beautiful reflections and lurid gleams from afar, and emitting a few, a very few, lightning flashes of genuine passion.

Much of Sidney's best verse is to be found in the songs which are intertwined with the sonnets. The majority of these, it is important to bear in mind, are full of reminiscences of French and Italian conceits, and if the poems as a connected series are really a record of passion tragically thwarted and finally suppressed, it is at least strange that this passion should have needed so much help from Petrarch and Desportes in expressing itself. It may be that the book as a whole has gained a partly adventitious reputation due to the personal fame of the writer, yet Sidney's sonnets are certainly superior to any previously written in English. Admirers of the French sonneteers could no longer maintain that the *quatorzain* was too delicate a plant to bear transplantation to England; and writing sonnets to the eyebrows of despaired-of mistresses, real or imaginary, soon became the reigning literary fashion. Many of these exercises are so wire-drawn as to leave one in doubt whether Sidney's influence was an unmitigated benefit. But in one respect, at any rate, it was of real value: like all romanticists, he had appealed to



nature. He had proclaimed love, love unadorned, a worthy and sufficient theme for the poet. The success of poems written on such a principle at a time when euphuism threatened to make of the lyric a scholastic exercise must have been really valuable.

The fashion set by Sidney, and also the particular form of the Elizabethan sonnet, is to a large extent confirmed by Daniel's collection of fifty-five sonnets entitled *Delia,* which found their way into print in February, 1592. The love which they celebrate is evidently of a very platonic kind, and to compensate for deficiency in passion, Daniel falls back upon the resources of his French masters, especially Desportes. The success of *Delia* was so unequivocal that several booksellers seem to have rashly concluded that sonnets were destined to make their fortunes. Within seven months of *Delia* appeared the slender and typical sonnet-book entitled *Diana.* The writer, Henry Constable (1562—1613), had the misfortune to be a Roman Catholic at a time when the anti-Jesuitical panic was at its height. He had to leave England hastily, was shadowed abroad by Protestant emissaries, repulsed at the Scottish court for fear of offending Elizabeth, and finally, on venturing to return without a licence, thrown into the Tower; and all this although he appears to have been of a most peaceable disposition, was of a good family, and, in his sonneteering days, would appear to have had the *entrée* at court. His sonnets are graceful, ingenious, and typical; sweet in phrase, wholly deficient in passion, wrought in the French vein and held up as good models by Ben Jonson and Edmund Boulton, who writes, in 1616, in his *Hypercritica* of Constable's, "quick and high discovery of conceits."

In 1593 the sonneteers were reinforced from various quarters. Barnaby Barnes gave forth over a hundred sonnets in his *Parthenophil and Parthenophe;* Watson issued



his sixty-one *Teares of Fancie, or Love Disdained;* Giles Fletcher his *Licia, or Poems of Love,* in honour of his lady; and Lodge his *Phillis,* which is perhaps the most charming of the minor sonnet-books of the period. Though a diligent imitator of the French, Lodge has the dexterity to give his complaints an air of the most direct and artless simplicity. Better than the sonnets themselves, however, are the pastoral lyrics which are scattered among them. Drayton's *Idea's Mirrour* came next in 1594, and within a twelve-month followed the *Cœlia* of William Percy, the *Zepheria* of some anonymous author, Chapman's *Coronet,* the *Alcilia* of J. C., *Forty Love Sonnets* by E. C., and, finally, the eighty-eight *Amoretti* of Spenser. Certain Amoretti were addressed, though not by name, to the Elizabeth Boyle, who, in 1594, became Spenser's wife; but many of them are either purely ideal or not poems of love at all. A few are wholly expressive of religious aspiration, while the larger proportion are of the conventional type. He represents his lady as a beautiful but carnivorous creature. In one sonnet she is a lion, in another a tiger, in a third a panther. Her cruelty is a constantly recurring theme. She is an angler who smiles on her dying victims so sweetly that they enjoy dying; a cruel dolphin who will not come to Arion; a new Pandora, her beauty is but a bait; she binds men in the golden net of her hair; again and again the poet begs her piteously not to slay him outright.

Sonneteering was a fashion the force of which was soon spent, but the publication of light lyrical verse, generally in song form, but in an immense variety of measures, continued in great vigour throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Next to Elizabethan drama, Elizabethan song is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the age. It is also the most independent, for in lyrical measures English poets forgot their classical and Italian



schoolmasters and were natural and spontaneous, or if schooled at all were schooled by the native English musicians. The early lyrists are frequently hampered by archaic idiom, clumsy convention, and outworn prosody; but in 1580 or thereabouts a change comes rapidly. Gaiety, expansiveness, fanciful ease, richness, and music take the ear and dispel the cloudy and didactic commonplace of lingering mediævalism.

This lyrical impulse seeks expression in a great variety of poetical forms. Elizabethan poets comparatively rarely published volumes containing lyric poems only. Such poems were frequently published in volumes containing poems of a different order, as in Drayton's *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral.* Lyric verse is also found scattered through the romances of Greene, Lodge, and others, in the plays of Shakespeare, Fletcher, Webster, Dekker, and Jonson, and in the sonnet-books. But the principal storehouses of purely lyrical verse published at this epoch are the miscellanies and the song-books. A rapid succession of such miscellanies is significant of the popular taste. The earlier anthologies of Tottel, Edwards, and Proctor[1] were thus followed in 1584 by Clement Robinson's *Handefull of Pleasant Delites.* In 1588 and 1592 appeared fresh delights and conceits under the names of Munday and Breton. In 1593 was published *The Phœnix Nest,* in 1599 *The Passionate Pilgrim,* and in 1600 no less than three separate anthologies of extremely varying but very high average merit: the famous and finely edited *England's Helicon,* the mediocre *England's Parnassus,* and an inferior scrap-book of "poetical petals" entitled *Belvedere, or The Garden of the Muses.* Finally, in 1602 was published Francis Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody.*

Still more significant in popular taste are the songbooks —slim quartos or folios in which words and music are printed together—a very large number of which were

[1] See pp. 105-108.



issued.[1] The most important of these were the song-books of William Byrd, John Dowland, Thomas Morley (of "It was a lover and his lass" fame), and Thomas Campion. As a general rule (though not in Campion's case), the composers were responsible only for the music in the books issued in their names. Much excellent verse and some exquisite specimens of pure song-writing were hidden away among the "ayres," motets, madrigals, and accompaniments of these and other song-books until they were brought to light mainly owing to the researches of Mr. A. H. Bullen.

Elizabethan music was music perfectly fitted to song, slight and melodic, full of local colour and suggestiveness, admirably adapted in every way to the flexible lyric poetry which was often not far removed from folk-song. The songs which were written to this music are marked by lack of intensity and passion, by brilliant fancy and unfailing vivacity; they are not overweighted with meaning, neither at their best are they overcharged with con-

[1] Davey gives a list of about ninety collections of Madrigals, Ayres, Canzonets and Ballets, actually published between 1587 and 1630, in addition to vast quantities of vocal music of this time in MS. (*History of English Music*, 171-4). It is important to distinguish between the quality of the madrigals and that of the "ayres." The former consisted of a few jingling rhymes set to elaborate music. The "ayres" are stanzaic, and the words are all-important to the composition, for the accompaniment is quite independent, and the tune ordinarily is simple and slow, so that not a word would be missed. As to the universal prevalence of music (1570-1630) the reader is referred to Chappell's *Popular Music of the Olden Time*. Servants and apprentices in those days advertised their musical abilities. Tinkers sang catches, milkmaids trolled ballads, carters whistled; each trade, and even the beggars, had their special songs; the viol hung in the guest-chamber for the amusement of casual visitors; our musical "execution" was the envy of all Europe; lute, cittern, and virginals for the



vention or with ornament. One of their essential qualities is their objective idealism, their impersonal character. The poet loves love, "sweet desire," but no single woman; he does not write from his own, but from common experience. He commonly masquerades as a shepherd, and in this capacity invites some dainty nymph to come maying with him or to play at barley-break. In a more serious mood he complains of the coldness of his mistress and her compassionless beauty, or dwells upon the superior happiness of shepherds as compared with courtiers. Many of the flakes from this wonderfully rich bed of Elizabethan song have such a light and holiday air about them that it is impossible to characterise or to classify them. They are as spontaneous and as irresponsible as nursery rhymes, the carols of choiring birds, or the tuneful *rispetti* of the Tuscan peasants. They sparkle, they sing of themselves, often to their own dance-music; spirit and substance, "music and sweet poetry agree" rarely—the enchantment, however, is not in the thought but in the tone.

Some of the deftest lyrics are often to be found embedded in plays the general character of which was anything but light or enticing, as, for example, in some of the dramas of Lyly, Dekker, Nash, Munday, and Jonson. Of the Elizabethan poets whose work as poets was primarily lyrical, the most characteristic are Greene, Lodge, Breton, Barnfield, and Campion.

diversion of waiting customers were in every barber's shop. They had music at dinner, music at supper, music at weddings, music at funerals, music at dawn, music at night. Musicians were constantly introduced upon the stage. Sometimes the dramatist wrote a song for them; more often they provided their own. The original identity of poet and musician had by no means disappeared when Elizabeth reigned. Much later, courtly poets and gentlemen of the Royal Music or Chapel Royal continued to be drawn from the same families.



Several of the lyrics in plays by Lyly [1] reach the highest point of daintiness and refinement. There is a haunting cadence about the few of Peele's songs that remain to us, such as the beautiful song of Paris and Œnone:

Fair and fair, and twice so fair
As fair as any may be.

And equally memorable with this, perhaps, is the quaint and inspiriting

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king

of Thomas Nash. Greene is even more prettily fantastic in such poems as "Sitting by a River's Side"; "Walking in a valley greene"; "Infida's Song"; "Weep not, my wanton; smile upon my knee"; or, the Shepherd's Wife's song:

Ah, what is love? It is a pretty thing.

His verses, like his plays, are a rich medley of classical allusions and folk-melodies, far-fetched measures and slipshod versifying, deliberate affectation and indefinite charm. But, with all his April variety, as a lyrist he still falls short of the prismatic wantonness of Thomas Lodge. Lodge was a poet of a rare and delicate talent, wholly lacking in seriousness or passion, but a more deliberate artist than Greene. He transplants freely from the French, more often than not greatly improving on his originals, and he has the verbal dexterity and daintiness of Ronsard without his seriousness. The well-known madrigal of *Rosalind,* in which love appears as a kind

[1] Whether he wrote them or not, let Professor Feuillerat, the great expert on Lyly, to whom we are indebted for several hints in this chapter, eventually decide; Mr. Greg thinks they may have been by Dekker.



of tickling, is perfect in its absolute harmony between form and content.

As fresh as Nash and as facile as Lodge, Breton approaches the latter in the careless vivacity with which he appears to prattle in verse. He scribbles incontinently, plays with words, defies grammar and logic, worries conceits to death, is always buoyant and artistic, and wonderfully seldom dull, considering how little he has to say. Read his honey-flowing seven-syllabled trochaics scattered about *The Passionate Shepherd* of 1604. They set the fashion to other heptasyllabic poets such as Wither before Carew and Waller made the fortune of octosyllabics. Breton captivates partly by his freshness and gaiety, partly by the genuine pleasure that he felt and conveyed in country hedges and blossoms. The ingenuity with which he rings the changes upon a few key-words in his composition is perfectly amazing. But preferable to these jugglings is a rippling movement such as the following, and in this kind he excels:

In the merry month of May,
On a morn by break of day,
Forth I walked by the woodside,
When as May was in his pride:
There I spied, all alone,
Phyllida and Corydon:
Much ado there was, God wot!
He would love and she would not.

A very similar note is struck in the pretty verses beginning "As it fell upon a day" by Richard Barnfield, a Staffordshire and Inns of Court gentleman who dedicated his *Affectionate Shepherd* (*i.e.* Daphnis sighing for the "love" of Ganymede) to Sidney's Lady Rich in 1594 and died at Shakespeare's age in 1627.

Barnfield's manner and his cloying sweetness were influenced apparently by Peele and by Shakespeare's narra-



tive poems; two of his lyrical fragments were included as by Shakespeare, along with Marlowe's "Come live with me" and other popular strains, in Jaggard's miscellany, *The Passionate Pilgrim,* which was brought out in 1599.

As that Elizabethan nightingale's re-discoverer and editor, Mr. Bullen, remarks: "There are no sweeter lyrics in English poetry than are to be found in Campion's song-books." In the distinctive charm of his lyric, Campion [1] would seem almost to blend the grace and tenderness of Greene with Lyly's wealth of mythological illustration and the artless simplicity (which is often the highest art) of Lodge: in proof of which it might almost suffice to cite such numbers, no longer unfamiliar, as "Come ye pretty false-eyed wanton," "O never to be moved, O beauty unrelenting," and "Shall I come, sweet love, to thee, when the evening beams are set." But Campion was also much more intellectual than the typical lyrists of his time. There is a sardonic note, a premonition of Donne, one might almost say of Heine, in stanzas such as "A secret love or two I must confess."

[1] Of Thomas Campion hardly anything is known save one or two friendships (Dowland and Nash), and enmities (Barnes and Breton). His Latin *Poemata* appeared in 1595, but it is for his *Airs* of 1601 and 1613 that we cherish his memory. He was an excellent scholar, a writer on music, and a "Doctor of Physicke." Carried off, it would seem, by the plague on March 1st, 1620, he was buried in St. Dunstan's; hence a pleasing reference by Edmund Gosse to A. H. Bullen's efforts as rehabilitator of the poet-musician—

"Bullen, well done!
Where Campion lies in London-land,
Lulled by the thunders of the Strand,
Screened from the sun,
Surely there must
Now pass some pleasant gleam
Across his music-haunted dream,
Whose brain and lute are dust."



As a supplement to these miscellaneous lyrics may be mentioned the courtly verses of a number of occasional amateurs in metre. Most of them are strictly occasional verses, inasmuch as their celebrity in nearly every case owes something to the circumstance either of the singer or the song. Such poems were Sir Walter Raleigh's reply to Marlowe's "Come live with me," his poem called *The Lie*, "Go soul, the body's guest," his famous verse "Fain would I climb, yet fear I to fall," or his couplet on the snuff of a candle the night before he died.

Equally famous, incomparably more poetical, are Browne's epigram, or epitaph, on the Countess of Pembroke:

> Underneath this sable hearse
> Lies the subject of all verse,
> Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother . . . ;

and the romantic lines of the accomplished Sir Henry Wotton on his mistress, the Queen of Bohemia, "You meaner beauties of the night." Contrast is found in the still noted verses of Bacon, "The world's a bubble, and the life of man less than a span," which are hardly poetical at all, and are less essays in metre than metrical essays. Somewhat akin to these in clumsiness are the effusions of Thomas Lord Vaux on the contented mind and the instability of youth. There is more pith in the fancies of Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, and more still in the early but well-tuned and idly imitated "My mind to me a kingdom is" of Sir Edward Dyer. Fulke Greville, the ill-fated Earl of Essex, and Sir John Harrington, or Harington, the *enfant terrible* of palace circles, helped to make up the tale of these courtly poets.[1]

[1] On that incomparable Eros of literature, the Elizabethan Song, putting aside the earlier books of Ritson, Bellamy (the glee collector), Chappell and Rimbault, the interest of which is



peculiar to the antiquary, the explorer should have recourse to the *Musa Madrigalesca* (1837) of Thomas Oliphant, and to Bullen's unrivalled series*: *Lyrics* and *More Lyrics* from Elizabethan Song-Books, and *Lyrics from Elizabethan Romances;* his editions of *England's Helicon, Davison's Poetical Rhapsody,* and *Thomas Campion,* and his *Love Poems from Song-Books of the Seventeenth Century.* He may also consult with profit Schelling's *Elizabethan Lyrics** and Carpenter's *English Lyrics.* For a magisterial exposition on English sonneteering, especially in regard to its close dependence upon French and Italian models, see *Elizabethan Sonnets,** ed. Sidney Lee (2 vols. in *An English Garner*).



CHAPTER VIII

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe."—BEN JONSON.

"Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame."—MILTON.

"But Shakespeare's magic could not copy'd be,
Within that circle none durst walk but he."—DRYDEN.

"Our myriad-minded Shakespeare."—COLERIDGE.

"Shakespeare's mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see."—EMERSON.

Life at Stratford—The player—Early poems—First-fruits—The flowering period—Shakespeare and Scott—Hamlet and the great tragedies—Later years—Bibliographical summaries.

IF the name of Shakespeare had come up before a lord-lieutenant or a genealogist during the first thirty years of Elizabeth's reign, it would have been readily identified as that of a large family of small farmers in the midland counties. During the last fifteen years of the same reign the name (which finds its equivalent in the well-known Italian surname, Crollalanza) was to acquire a celebrity which has given it a unique and almost sacrosanct significance from that day to this. As in the case of so many great men, the place and time of Shakespeare's nativity have been the subjects of much animated discussion, the echoes of which have by no means died away, even at the present day. It is generally believed, however, that Shakespeare was born in a roomy cottage neighbouring the site of



what is now known as "Shakespeare's Birthplace," in Henley Street, Stratford-on-Avon,[1] during the second half of April, 1564. His christening is thus entered in Church Latin in the baptismal register of the parish church of the Holy Trinity, Stratford-on-Avon: "1564, April 26th, Gulielmus filius Johannes Shakspere." Of Shakespeare's father, the said Johannes or John Shakespeare, we strive in vain to get a clear idea, based upon such facts as that he was a chief alderman of his native Stratford, that he married a rich wife, Mary Arden, daughter of Robert Arden of Wilmecote or Wilmcote, and begot a large family, that he apparently had heavy losses, was continually engaged in lawsuits, but continued "merry-cheek'd," and, like Mr. Wilkins Micawber, was invincibly hopeful that something would turn up. John Shakespeare bought the Henley Street property in 1556 and brought his wife home there in the following year. Ten years later he was head bailiff of the town and welcomed the Queen's and other companies of players to Stratford. In 1575 he bought the house familiar to-day as the "Birthplace"; but from 1557 the fortunes of the once prosperous glover began to decline. Every long holiday that the eldest son spent at home from the Free Grammar School we can imagine him noticing that the family resources were steadily diminishing, while every year his father had in prospect some new lawsuit or some new business scheme whereby the finances of the Shakespeares were infallibly to be restored.

After a few years' subjection to the good pedagogue

[1] A small town of then about 1,300 inhabitants, clustered round the ford at which the ancient Roman street from Londinium to Uriconium crossed the Warwickshire Avon, though from about 1490 the road was carried over the river by a noble stone bridge (still standing), called after its builder, Sir Hugh Clopton. Legend says that the bard was born on the same day of the month that he died. We may safely drink to his memory on any day from the 20th to the 25th.



THE CHANDOS SHAKESPEARE





Walter Roche, Shakespeare had to leave his Latin book and the quaint gabled schoolroom with its rough desks and wooden beams, which still forms a most genuine attraction to all Stratford pilgrims—he had to quit these altogether, and rally to the help of his father in the humble trade to which all his great projects had reduced him, that of a common butcher.

John Aubrey, the first of our antiquaries who thought it worth while to record anecdotes about Shakespeare, when collecting materials (the product of a journey made to Stratford about 1662) for Anthony à Wood, wrote of the poet at this time: "His father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he kill'd a calf he would doe it in high style, and make a speech. There was at that time another butcher's son in this towne that was held not at all inferior to him for naturall witt, his acquaintance and coetanean, but dyed young." These days in the slaughter-house must evidently have been to Shakespeare what those in the blacking factory were to Dickens. They begot in him an unconquerable determination to rise to a position of well-to-do respectability in the world.

A mile or two from Stratford is a hamlet named Shottery, accessible by a short walk through pleasant fields from the little town. Here, in a cottage of thatch, brick, and rubble which is still standing, lived Richard Hathaway, husbandman, and his daughter Anne. Shakespeare as a lad of eighteen must apparently have fallen in love with the maiden of twenty-five or six. According to an entry in the register of the Bishop of Worcester (Whitgift), a licence was granted on November 27th, 1582, for a marriage between William Shaxpere and Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton. On the following day (November 28th) a bond was entered into, in which two



husbandmen of Stratford guaranteed the bishop against liability for any objection that might be made against him (such as pre-contract or consanguinity) for allowing the contemplated marriage between William Shagspere and Anne Hathwey of Stratford-upon-Avon: provided, moreover, that Anne obtained the consent of her friends, the marriage was to be allowed to proceed with but once asking of the banns instead of the usual thrice.[1] Although at first sight the discrepancy in details appears to justify the opinion that different transactions are referred to, there are good reasons for the belief that both of the records relate to the licence for the poet's marriage, and that the entry in the bishop's register is incorrect, all the available evidence being in favour of the greater accuracy of the bond. The presumption is that the ceremony of marriage was precipitated; the view, however, that anything discreditable to Shakespeare or his wife is implied by the application for a licence is not sustained either by the documentary evidence or by a consideration of the known facts relating to the marriage. The urgency may have been dictated by a prospect of legal advantage, or by the poet's impending departure from Stratford. Aubrey "guessed" that he went to London "about eighteen" (1582). On the other hand legend hints that during the next three years or so Shakespeare endeavoured to gain his living as a lawyer's clerk and as a village schoolmaster.

[1] For obscure questions raised by Shakespeare's marriage, see C. I. Elton, *William Shakespeare: his Family and Friends;* and Joseph William Gray, *Shakespeare's Marriage*, 1905. The baptisms of his children are thus recorded in the Stratford registers: "1583. *b.* May 26, Susanna, daughter to William Shakspere." "1585. *b.* February 2, Hamnet and Judeth, sonne and daughter to William Shakspere." Hamnet, who died in August, 1596, was named after a neighbour, Hamnet Sadler, who was on March 25th, 1616, one of the signatories of Shakespeare's will.



Aubrey, in his short account, expressly says "he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger days a schoolmaster in the country." Whatever Shakespeare's chief means of subsistence may have been at the time—and there are reasons for supposing that he may have endeavoured to play more than one part—everything points to the fact that his chief relaxation was to be found in those sports of the countryside to which his country training and connections would naturally predispose him. Most notable, indeed, throughout Shakespeare's writings are the spontaneous and almost unconscious allusions to the minuter details of field sport. A poaching adventure is plausibly alleged to have been the immediate cause of his abandonment of Stratford. "He had," wrote his first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, in 1709, "by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and, among them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stalking, engaged him with them more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him, and though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire and shelter himself in London." Whether it be true or no, as a local parson, Richard Davies, who died in 1708, used to relate, that Lucy had Shakespeare whipped for his depredations, it is certain that Sir Thomas Lucy spoke in Parliament during 1585 on behalf of more stringent game laws, and that Shakespeare had a clear passado at Sir Thomas in 1600 when he made Justice Shallow boast of the dozen white *luces* in his coat in proof of his ancient lineage. It is an old



coat, comments Sir Hugh Evans, "the dozen white louses do become an old coat well." Soon afterwards Falstaff comes in, and Shallow taunts him with the very crimes which we know that the game-preserving old seigneur so keenly resented in "young Stratford."

"Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and have broken open my lodge," and he forthwith threatens to make a Privy Council matter of it. This was Sir Thomas Lucy all over, as Stratford archives attest.

Shakespeare must surely in July, 1575, have seen the revels at Kenilworth during the progress thither, when he was yet a boy, of the spectacle-loving Gloriana; and besides, he would be likely to have seen the old-fashioned miracle plays at Coventry, in addition to the repertoire of roving companies nearer home in guild-hall or market-square, by consent of the corporation of his native town. In 1587 no fewer than five companies of actors visited Stratford. That his young aspirations should have been stirred by contact with a force so novel, so untried, yet so potent as the new drama obviously was, is not all to be wondered at. It was a rare moment for art in England. The culture of the Renaissance was just blossoming here—in music, in poetic rhapsody, in lyrical effusions, in the rich embroidery of vernacular prose—under the protection of the short-lived Tudor despotism.

Whether Shakespeare joined a travelling company at Stratford, or trudged his way independently to London in 1586 to claim the hand of fellowship, it may be, from a fellow Stratfordian, Richard Field, a prosperous stationer of Blackfriars, can only be matter for conjecture; what is pretty certain is that he very soon gravitated to the theatre. Of the two chief companies in being at that time, the Queen's and the Earl of Leicester's, he became attached to the last-mentioned, and, if it were not already the best, he speedily made it so. Its headquarters were the



Theatre playhouse, situated without the City, among fields in Shoreditch, but it moved several times[1] ere it settled, in 1599, at the Globe, on Bankside, Southwark, while its patronage passed from Leicester to Strange, and from Strange to Hunsdon, Lord Chamberlain; hence it became known from 1594 as the Lord Chamberlain's Company.[2] All the companies went on tour during the summer.

In however menial a capacity Shakespeare may first have assisted the theatrical company into which he was first admitted, it can hardly have been long before the intelligent members of it (among them Dick Burbage, Heminge, and Condell) discovered that they had to do with a youth of extraordinary promise. As Napoleon made suggestions at Toulon when he was merely a lieutenant, so Shakespeare may early have made suggestions the value of which instantaneously struck his superiors. That he would soon absorb all the romances and plays within his reach, and would most rapidly learn all that could be learned of the working of the theatre, may be regarded as certain. That a time quickly came when plays would be put in his hands for suggestion or revision is very probable. He would soon perceive the characteristic defects of the plays which possessed the stage at the moment. The comedy was too academic (Lyly), the

[1] To the Curtain in Moorfields (hence Curtain Road), to the Rose on Bankside, and to Newington Butts. The patronage of the companies was traditional, the nominal patrons contributing little more than their names. In 1610-11 Shakespeare played occasionally at his company's second house, the Blackfriars, where *The Times* now stands. Shakespeare suffered loss, and the MSS. of his plays were probably destroyed in the fire at the Globe, which broke out when *Henry VIII.* was being performed in June, 1613.

[2] After James I.'s accession in May, 1603, they were promoted to be the King's Players, and acquired the rank of Grooms of the Royal Chamber.



tragedy too full of rant and extravagance (Marlowe), the melodrama too sanguinary (Kyd), and the history too rude and archaic both in form and diction.

Of his early work as reviser and adapter, we have examples in *Henry VI.*, into the aridities of which he infused some life, humour, and poetry; *Titus Andronicus*, a perfect shambles of a play, over which he breathed a little country air; and *The Taming of the Shrew*, an old-fashioned farce of which he greatly enriched the humour. But from reviser of existing dramatic work he must have very rapidly risen to be author-in-chief of his company. An actor himself, no one so well as he could adapt a catching part to an individual performer. By 1590 the company's belief in "young Shakespeare" must have become a firm article of faith. He was now twenty-six, and was already becoming known rather widely, we can fancy, as a good-looking fellow, of astonishing quickness and talent, as a delightful companion of singularly attractive personality, and as a safe and resourceful, rather than as a particularly brilliant actor.[1] Shakespeare had started work as an adapter, and his first independent work is essentially adaptive and imitative. In the course of his revisions he must have got a considerable insight into the methods of such experienced playwrights as Greene and Peele, Gascoigne, Nash, Chettle, Whetstone, and Kyd. But the dramatists for whom he had a particular admiration were Lyly and Marlowe. Both of these writers were in the habit of borrowing their plots or fables from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (the Elizabethan substitute for a Classical Dictionary), from *ben trovato* tales in popular chapbooks, or from the modern stories, novelles or historiettes, which had sprung up in Italy with Boccaccio and

[1] The parts generally ascribed to him include the Ghost in *Hamlet*, Adam in *As You Like It*, several "kingly parts," a rôle in *Sejanus*, and old Knowell in *Every Man in his Humour*.



Bandello, and had been imitated and translated into every modern European tongue. Both, again, were extraordinarily fond of mythological ornament, and were never tired of introducing somewhat hackneyed forms of classical imagery. With both these practices Shakespeare found it exceedingly convenient to comply. Judging by the evidence of his own writings and the statement of Aubrey, he had been well grounded in Ovid, and had the old *Sententiæ Pueriles* and *Colloquia,* and not a little of Mantuanus and Virgil besides, at his fingers' ends. In addition to which, the author of *The Comedy of Errors* may well have construed a play or two each by Plautus and Terence. Shakespeare had a sounder classical discipline than Molière, and *à fortiori* than Cervantes or the author of the *Ode to a Grecian Urn* (who got nearly all his "classics" from Lemprière); yet his "little Latin" must always be a stumbling-block to the pedants who, by a law of their being, insist that no one can be expected to write good English unless he can compose bad Latin!

Such then were the influences and the aspirations under the sway of which Shakespeare about 1590 put forth the first-fruits of his drama in sprightly comedies, such as *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,*[1] intermingled with the mirthful farce of *The Comedy of Errors.* In reality and charm they are far in advance already of the toylike frigidity of Lyly; full of rhyming and bickering and phrase-capping and rather vapid classical affectation (and other infallible signs of very early work) as they are, we can still detect in them the grace, the wit, and the fun which are to become so pre-eminent in Shakespearean comedy—all these are pres-

[1] The true spirit of humour enters our drama when Launce appears on the stage leading his dog with a string. The same dog was, no doubt, used by Starveling in *Midsummer Night's Dream.*



ent, but present in embryo. These three plays mark Shakespeare's playtime. In *Richard III.* he indicates already his strong practical tendency; he writes a regular ranting play, very Marlowesque in character, and moreover a one-part play of a pattern that must have been dear indeed to a tragedy lead (such as Burbage, for instance). Its success on the boards was the foundation-stone of his fortune. In *King John* he makes another popular bid by addressing a play to the hot Protestant prejudice of the hour. It shows an advance upon *Richard III.* in the art of characterisation; but it is inferior as a work of poetic art to *Richard II.* The opening speech in *Richard III.* is a magnificent overture, but here in Gaunt's dying speech we get the full symphonic utterance of the new master:

> **This happy breed of men, this little world,**
> **This precious stone set in the silver sea,**
>
> **This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,**
> **This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,**
> **Fear'd by their breed and famous for their birth.**

Here too we get the first glimpse of the interest still taken by England in the strange and fluctuating history of the old dynastic feuds. They were to the youth of Shakespeare what the Jacobite stories of the *Tales of a Grandfather* were to the boyhood of Scott; and this series of plays, together with the novels of Scott, form the finest background for his historical consciousness that an English boy can well have. Shakespeare's princes and statesmen in their speeches seem to give us the very pith and marrow of history.

Hitherto, excellently though he was writing, Shakespeare had written nothing that would place his output much above the work of such a dramatist as Francis Beaumont. It is true that he had written two "honey-flowing"



and highly decorative poems, the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece,* full of sensuous beauty, showing that he had felt to the full that religion of Beauty which all highly impressionable youth must feel: these he had addressed in flowery language as the "first heir" of his "invention" to the young Earl of Southampton,[1] the handsomest and one of the richest men about the court, who was his special patron at the playhouse, and the addressee of many of the exquisite sonnets which he began writing soon after the publication of the poems in 1593-4. It is true, too, that he was beginning to be known and cordially disliked on account of his too rapid rise. Greene, prematurely worn

[1] Richard Field (a fellow-townsman of Shakespeare) was the publisher of *Venus and Adonis*, which was licenced April 18th, 1593, and brought out next month at the "White Greyhound in Paules Church-Yard": the dedication was signed "Your Honor's in all dutie, William Shakespeare." It proved enormously popular and went through seven editions in ten years. (For details of its debt to Ovid, Dolce, Tarchagnota and Spenser's *Astrophel*, see *Shakespeare's Poems*, ed. Lee, 1905). The remark of the coxcomb Gullio (a Slender in cap and gown) in the amusing students' play of *The Returne from Parnassus* (1599) gives us a notion of how its syrupy beauties were idolised by university wits. "O sweet Mr. Shakespeare! I'll have his picture in my study at the court. . . . Let the duncifiede age esteem of Spenser and Chaucer, I'll worship *sweet Mr. Shakespeare*, and to honour him will lay his *Venus and Adonis* under my pillow." In 1594 Richard Field printed *Lucrece*, also dedicated to Southampton, which Shakespeare modelled externally upon Samuel Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* in the rhyme-royal of Chaucer or seven-line stanza, as he had modelled *Venus and Adonis*, in six-line stanza, upon the *Scillæs Metamorphosis* of Thomas Lodge. *Lucrece* proved nearly as popular as its predecessor (5th ed., 1616) and in 1598 in his *Poems in Divers Humours*, Richard Barnfield specially commended the "honey-flowing vein" of the poet—

"Whose Venus and whose Lucrece (sweet and chaste)
Thy Name in Fame's immortal Book have placed."



out with sedentary toil and incessant scribbling, did his best to give the young man a fall in his dying valediction (published by his friend Henry Chettle in September, 1592) called *A Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance.* Beware, he wrote, in effect, to his fellow-toilers, of this upstart antic, who decks himself in your plumes, and then jets and struts as if the whole theatre belonged to him alone, low-bred Johannes Factotum that he is. Shakespeare's rising consideration is shown by the fact that Greene's publisher, like the good, careful tradesman that he was, wrote at once to explain away his client's petulance, and to put on record without delay that Shakespeare was in reality the most obliging, the most favoured for his uprightness by "divers of worship," and the most admirable of men and players. He was, at any rate, the most able, and capable of being one of the most formidable to a small man like Chettle. We come across several other contemporary sneers at Shakespeare's ambition, his snobbery in applying for a coat-of-arms, and his inordinate pride in buying the Big House in Stratford. But to such attacks Shakespeare never waited to reply or to retaliate; he was too busy and too successful. In March, 1594, by a warrant dated from Whitehall, Kemp, Shakespeare, Burbage and company were awarded £21 for "two comedies or enterludes [very probably *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labour's Lost*] shewed before her Majestie at Christmas." *The Comedy of Errors* was given that same Christmas in Gray's Inn Hall. Henceforth Shakespeare's plays as given by the Burbage-Shakespeare combination were frequently commanded at court,[1] at the Temple, at functions of the nobility, and elsewhere.

[1] A new record of a royal command to Shakespeare and Burbage to produce a play at court before James I., in return for an unusually substantial payment, has recently been discovered.



It was, in fact, during the next two years, 1594-6, that Shakespeare began in a marked degree to distance all competitors. For he wrote about this time *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet,* the first draft of *All's Well that Ends Well* (or *Love's Labour's Won*), and *The Merchant of Venice. A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a pastoral fairy-drama of the highest poetic beauty. In the loveliness of its lyrical music, and in that of its woodland, floral, hunting, and moonlight scenes, it has rivals only in *The Merchant, As You Like It,* and *The Winter's Tale.* Shakespeare may not improbably have played Theseus himself, and given utterance to that noble sentiment,

> **For never anything can be amiss**
> **When simpleness and duty tender it;**

and we have reason to be thankful that he had some good voices in the company who could sing "You spotted snakes," and other such delightful lyrical fragments. As a whole the play is unique, and not one of Shakespeare's dramas is a more perfectly harmonious whole. It is the first of his plays which, from the first scene, in which Hermia is given her choice between marriage with Demetrius and

> **living a barren sister all her life,**
> **Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon,**

to the last, in which the fairies dance at midnight in Theseus's palace, is unmistakably a work of genius.[1]

[1] How beautifully the bewilderments of the night evaporate with the dawn! Theseus, the practical rationalistic man, enters with his dogs and horses: straightway these beautiful images and hallucinations fade. Fairies! what nonsense! Dreams bodied forth by the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, that is what they are! Observe that it is the clown Bottom who has *seen* the fairies, not the wise Theseus. The ending



Written probably when Shakespeare was about thirty, or even a little before, *Romeo and Juliet* is less flawless,[1] and less free from the preciosity of Lyly than the *Dream*, yet it must be considered upon the whole as a work of greater significance and moment. It is, indeed, one of Shakespeare's most world-wide triumphs; nay more, it is the typical love tragedy of the world, for, as Tennyson said, "No one has drawn the true passion of love" as Shakespeare has done here. How many love scenes has it inspired, from De Musset downwards? The nearest approach to it that we can think of is the love duet between Richard and Lucy in *Richard Feverel*. You feel at once what Shakespeare meant you to feel, that the culmination of the love of these two beautiful, ardent, and thrilling young human creatures is the object and climax of all existence. Yet with what finished art has Shakespeare provided relief for their simplex passion in the complex worldly wisdom of the Friar and the Nurse, and the transcendental wit of Mercutio! With what witchery of magic has he transformed and transfigured some of the oldest

is practical and material—wedding, feasting, a right glorious evening, wassail and a pantomime. Theseus is right. But then Shakespeare prepares an exquisite surprise for us. These are fairies after all, for after they have all parted and said the last word, the fairies enter and dance a ringlet in the empty halls (music by Mendelssohn). This play helps us to realise Shakespeare's debt to an England alien and remote from the England of to-day, to the wellsprings of our ancient communistic literature, to the faery lore of still older races. Nothing he wrote is a more wonderful harmony of ancient mythology, English and Celtic folk-lore and Renaissance culture. For some suggestions here the writer is indebted to a delightful lecture delivered by Mr. G. K. Chesterton, though he fears that his recollections are sadly imperfect.

[1] There are occasional specimens of almost imbecile punning, and lapses here and there into a kind of taste which is quasi-barbaric.



and most hackneyed lyrical motives, such as the declaration of love, the love soliloquy, and the dawn-song ere lovers part! This period of Shakespeare's work seems to us marked as no other by an air of conscious triumph in his mastery on the part of the artist, who was, had he known it, at the very point of the assumption of the primacy among all our poets. Of this period of fabulous growth and sunny realisation of power the most characteristic example, however, is *The Merchant of Venice*. To labour a tale of Arabian extravagance to anything like probability Shakespeare makes simply no attempt; in the style of play which he favoured he clung most tenaciously to the element of opera and the agency of miracle; but he revelled frankly in his newborn power, and gave his audience of his best. In Shylock, a man perverted to a base malignity by a just sense of racial wrong, he created his first really tragic figure, and he revealed to us for the first time the inmost soul of a complex man. Yet see how unceremoniously Shylock is shuffled off at the end of the fourth act, so as not to disturb the ravishing moonlight melodies which bring this miraculous and most typical play to a fitting close. This last act has always seemed to us absolutely transporting, suggestive in some complicated and far-off way of Watteau and of Persia, of stately terraces and old court costumes, of warm southern nights, of fountains splashing in the moonlight, of songs and silvery chimes and dance melodies, of the twanging of lutes and the twinkling of feet amidst the delicious perfumes of pinewoods in summer. It is hard to leave Belmont. There is enchantment in the very name!

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!

Shakespeare followed up these early comedies by that wonderful series of historical dramas, the two parts of *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.* (1597-9). Together these plays



form an epic, rising at its close to an apotheosis of English might and achievement. In variety, interest, and power they are very far removed from his earlier efforts in historical drama; and borrowed wholesale though the material is from Holinshed, they are in reality among the most original of all his productions. In splendour of rhetoric, constructive skill, knowledge of life, characterisation, and creative humour (Falstaff), these plays show a marked advance upon anything that Shakespeare had yet done.[1] And here we must remark upon a peculiarity in Shakespeare's work as a whole, which differentiates it from that of almost all other artists in literature—its progressive character. Beginning with brilliant experiments and imitative essays in drama, he reaches the limits of pure fancy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* scales the heights of observation of common life and sounds the depths of its humour in *Henry IV.,* leaves even this behind, and goes on to produce the perfect comedy of his *floreal* period (*As You Like It, All's Well, Much Ado,* and *Twelfth Night*), in which romance and reality, prismatic wit and genial humour, are so consummately blended;[2] passes on to

[1] One of his best stage hits was the original prose farce of *The Merry Wives:* written hastily (so it is handed down) in fourteen days in order to exhibit Falstaff in a new light as a frustrate and befooled Don Juan. The most laughable and boisterous thing of its kind, it at the same time eclipses the contemporary *Every Man in his Humour* (1598) as a picture of manners, and illustrates to perfection Shakespeare's almost miraculous gift of changing the stops. On the complex character of Falstaff, see G. Radford (in *Obiter Dicta,* 1885, p. 200) and Maurice Morgann, *Character of Falstaff* (1777).

[2] The atmosphere of this *floreal* period (1599-1601) is delightfully suggested by Stopford Brooke in the opening sentences of his study of *As You Like It.* Shakespeare laughed out the title of this gay and graceful play one day "after reading what he had written. 'Take it as you like it, in whatever way it pleases you. Take its mirth or seriousness, its matter



unapproached altitudes in *Hamlet, Othello,* and *Lear;* and, when it is apparently impossible that absolute power should increase, still widens his thought until, like an arctic midnight, it seems to combine the hues of sunset and of dawn in the sovereign serenity of *The Tempest,* passionless, but not less powerful than the greatest of his tragedies.

Before 1601 the genius of Shakespeare had but rarely travelled into the regions of the sublime or the mysterious. From this date onward, however, especially in the "great quadrilateral" of *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello,* and *Lear,* we are simply overwhelmed by tragical issues, terrible and profound, interrupted only by the irony of *Troilus and Cressida* and the speculations of *Measure for Measure.* Great resolutions (as in *Hamlet*) the mere plaything of accident; valour, in *Macbeth,* stooping to crime; honour and fidelity victims, in *Othello,* to bat-like suspicion; generosity betrayed to selfishness, great dominion to lust, legitimate pride to insensate passion, old age the resistless prey of vultures in human form, revenge, jealousy, the appalling "Tragedy of Sleep"—these are some of the themes.[1] If we try to determine the reason for this per-

of thought or fancy, its grave or lively characters, its youthful love and self-conscious melancholy—take anything you like out of it. There is plenty to please all kinds. It is written for your pleasure.' The solemn professor, the most solid moralist, will not be able to assert that Shakespeare wrote this play with a moral purpose, or from a special desire to teach mankind. He wrote it as he liked it, for his own delight. He hoped men would listen to it for their pleasure, and take it just as they liked best to take it" (*Ten Plays of Shakespeare,* 1905).

[1] A few essential features of the tragedy of Shakespeare may be observed. "It is invariably a tragedy of weakness. There is no instance in it of the struggle of a strong man against overwhelming circumstances, or the struggle of a good man against overwhelming evil. In no single instance



sistent selection of tragic themes during the seven years that intervene between *Julius Cæsar* and *Coriolanus* (1601-8), we can do little more than take our choice between a growing sense of the waning romance of life and of the omnipresence of evil, the importunity of deeper problems, a changing mood in the audience no less than in its author, the activity of younger rivals, the clamour of "star" actors for bigger parts—last, but not least, the tariff question, the tidal influence of supply and demand. In these four plays Shakespeare left the zephyrs of light summer comedy for the storm-winds of tropical passion. They seem compounded of the elements. In *Hamlet* (1602) we first see that Shakespearean concentration, fusion, and balance which are so distinctive of Shakespeare and of Shakespeare alone. The drama is one of moods finding expression in passages which, so far as the

does the hero's fall result from his own nobility of character or purpose—it is in every case the consequence of his own weakness or follies. Every one of the heroes of Shakespearean tragedy is a weak man. . . . Hamlet, the highest spirit of them all, fails least. He at least in a fashion does his work. Nor is the theme of this tragedy in any case a moral struggle against what is called temptation. The themes chosen are not ethical in any distinctive sense. Love again plays a comparatively small part in Shakespearean tragedy. . . ." It would be rash to draw very positive conclusions from these facts, but they are suggestive. Shakespeare was an idealistic artist, but he lived in the centre of the actual. Now the tragedy of moral struggle, or of heroic failure, or of love are things comparatively rare, but the tragedy of weakness is—everywhere. But the tragedy of mere weakness is apt to be sordid. That it is never so in Shakespeare is due to the dramatist's characteristic love of intensity in human character. Shakespeare's tragic heroes, though none of them are heroic, are none of them mediocre; all are finely or even splendidly endowed. Every one of them has great qualities, and most of them are men of conspicuous intellect. See *The Age of Shakespeare*, vol. ii. pp. 85-6.



experience of 300 years goes, have proved the most memorable in all literature. *Othello* (1604) is the most artistically coherent and the most intense of the four; it is, to our mind, the greatest of all stage plays, but it requires Titans as actors. With an Iago of a calibre equal to that of Salvini as Othello, the play would be almost too terrible to behold. *Macbeth* (1605?), fragmentary though it be, is the most picturesque and imaginative of all modern dramas. To the actor it has proved murderously and fatally irresistible, for it is the least playable of dramas, and essentially, as Johnson said, a play for the closet. *Lear* (1606) is the grandest, the largest, and the most sublime of all Shakespeare's dramas, and in its entirety is almost too vast to be fully comprehended. This is not because anything in *Lear* is obscure, or far-fetched, or unintelligible—Shakespeare is never metaphysical or mystical; his best things are three parts truism, and what makes the mintage Shakespearean is the perfection of the die from which he strikes the thoughts of Everyman—but it is by means of the grouping and collocation of circumstances and by the lightning play of Nemesis that Shakespeare renders *Lear* so universally overwhelming. One feels of it at times almost as Johnson felt of Burke once, "If I had to read *Lear* now, it would kill me."

In none of these plays is there anything approaching to self-revelation. We can never feel sure how Shakespeare felt towards any of his characters. No great writer, if we put aside Homer, reveals so little of himself in his writings. In *Hamlet*, it is true, we get some trace of his professional views and a slight gust of one of the storms that troubled his professional career.[1] In Ulysses it is

[1] The rivalry in "classical" plays between Shakespeare and his friend Ben Jonson, and the bitter feud (in which Jonson was also closely involved) between the adult and boy actors. For an illuminating account of this, and in regard



possible that we get Shakespeare's own conception of subordination as the axis of human society:

> **The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre**
> **Observe degree, priority and place. . . .**
> **Take but degree away, untune that string,**
> **And, hark, what discord follows!**

In *Coriolanus,* again, taken in connection with what has gone before, we seem to get just a hint of Shakespeare's political antipathy—Demos. A mob to him (like a motor with us) was a thing inseparable from an evil smell, a thing most rank and corrupt, both literally and metaphorically. Shakespeare was, in the best sense of the word, essentially an aristocrat, and it is instructive to see how writers of a democratic humour have shown an instinctive dislike of him. Bunyan had probably never heard of him, but Swift and Defoe mistrusted him; and Goldsmith, in *The Vicar of Wakefield,* attributes a taste for "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" to the sham refinement of Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs; Burns preferred *Douglas* to *Macbeth;* and Tolstoi would put Schiller or Ibsen above the author of *Hamlet,* while Cobbett, with his usual *sans gêne,* speaks of Shakespeare as "a

to the amount of self-revelation in the *Sonnets,* see Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare.* Mr. Lee holds that this amount has been unduly exaggerated. It may be that he goes rather too far in the opposite direction; but there can be no doubt of the great service he has done in demolishing the superstructure of fable about the dedication of the *Sonnets* as issued in 1609. The book, as was common in those days, was published without the author's permission by a stationer "in the street," one Thomas Thorpe; and the "dark" dedication was merely a more or less hackneyed trade compliment which one of these pushful book-pirates (with a lively anticipation of favours to come in return) was in the habit of paying to another member of the same confraternity. See *Poems of Shakespeare* (1905, Oxf. Univ. Press).



punster and a smutster" and a "great snob" for making paladins of the two young peasants in *Cymbeline,* owing to the mere fact that royal blood coursed secretly in their veins.

It remains true that Shakespeare is inscrutable,—he "ne'er left his bosom's gate ajar"; yet he is not so wholly elusive as Matthew Arnold would have us believe;[1] nor can the patient and attentive student by means of negative and analogical processes fail to discern at least some traces of the distinctive lineaments of his genius. Like not a few of the greatest creators of world-literature, Cervantes, Molière, Scott, Shakespeare was not a self-conscious artist. His literary work, conceived as he pursued a round of avocations that would have quite sufficiently absorbed a more than ordinarily successful man of talent, must have found expression and taken form, without extraordinary elaboration; but with a perfectly amazing rapidity. He was evidently no eccentric; to the exhaustion incident upon preliminary labours which has sterilised so many men of first-rate talent he was obviously a stranger; of the seclusion which so many deem indispensable to perform intellectual labour he was manifestly oblivious. The inner necessity that prompted him to such work as he performed must have been strong, nay, overpowering. As with Sir Walter Scott or Napoleon I., the ostensible pretext (even to himself) for an amount of effort that may well seem to us superhuman was the alleged necessity of building up a property, an ancestral mansion, or an empire—in each case for phantom heirs to inherit. In each case, in strict reality, the work must have been its own stimulus and its achievement the main, truly substantial, reward. As in the case of Scott, we have contemporary evidence which seems to us to point decisively

[1] "Others abide our question. Thou art free." "Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure."



to Shakespeare's exceptional sociability and to the sweetness and serenity of his temper. Apart from his work, however, there is no necessity for believing that Shakespeare was in the ordinary traffic of human intercourse (any more than Scott) an exceptionally brilliant man. Fuller's brilliant word-picture of Ben Jonson as conversationally a solid high-built Spanish galleon, and Shakespeare as a trim English man-of-war, taking advantage of every wind, and sailing round and round his adversary by sheer quickness of wit and invention, was, we must remember, a purely imaginary one printed after the Restoration. Had Shakespeare really excelled so greatly in conversation as his great contemporary Jonson, or Ben's still more illustrious namesake the incomparable Doctor of a later age, we could hardly have failed to have specific reference to such a talent. Ben Jonson, for instance, in his *Timber* (published 1641), in which he so cordially praises his old rival, as "honest and of an open nature," a man to be loved, and his memory honoured "on this side idolatry," never thinks of comparing him as a talker with Lord Bacon, whose discourse was such that "a hearer could not cough or look aside from him without loss." In Shakespeare's case, as in that of so many typical men of letters, we are prepared to believe that the faculty of expression was by a subtle alchemy transmuted and the man himself, as it were, transfigured by the magic of the pen.

To continue the process of analogy: Shakespeare, like other men of genius who stand nearest in relation to his particular stamp, borrowed materials very freely, but imitated in the strictest sense very little. Of the distilling process, and sedulous imitation of artistic effects as practised by such masters as Milton and Tennyson, he was altogether innocent. His art, we may say in fine, was consistently more of the subconscious than of the self-conscious order.



Once more, it seems to us, does Shakespeare resemble Scott in his master qualities of humour, reality of observation, and constructive imagination. Beside his Richards and Henrys, as beside the James I. and Louis XI. of Sir Walter, how shadowy and faint do most elaborate historical portraits appear, even those of a Motley or Macaulay! The humorous figures of his comedy—veritable giants, some of these—stand equally apart: Falstaff, Autolycus, Bottom, Dogberry, Sir Toby, unrivalled, perhaps, in any literature, unapproached in English, save only by Sterne and Dickens. The same in even a greater degree applies to his tragic figures, Antony and Cleopatra, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Isabella and Claudia, Othello and Iago, for instance. Reflect only for a moment on the energy, the brain power, the passion, the throbbing humanity in the contrast between these last two characters alone; and then the extraordinary and lifelike vividness with which the crisis of those two men's lives and those of the group depending on them are adapted and concentrated into two brief hours of stage dialogue and the successive fevers of delight, anxiety, wrath, dismay, and anguish excited in the mind of every spectator who possesses a heart and a brain. Where out of Shakespeare can this overpowering effect upon the imagination of man be approached? Macaulay cannot be far wrong when he says, "This play of love and jealousy is the master-work of the whole world." Shakespeare added to all these qualities, as we have seen, an almost superabundant wit. He abused the gift sometimes, it cannot be denied. On the other hand, we must remember that many of his jests (such as those in *Much Ado* and *Twelfth Night*), now decidedly obscure, were momentarily the most exquisite of all, the most topical, and consequently the most highly relished at the time. Out of a play, more than almost every form of literary composition, virtue inevitably



evaporates with the lapse of time. But for the most part Shakespeare's wit is still pregnant in the highest sense, and reminds the reader of Porson's saying, "Wit is in general the finest sense in the world." "Wit and Truth (true reasoning) I discovered to be one and the same."

So completely free is Shakespeare from the meshes of anything approaching a philosophical system, that one would hesitate to pronounce him definitely either an optimist or a pessimist. For "utter freedom of thought," as Goethe observed, not infrequently in the direction of irony and cynicism, it is difficult to surpass some passages in *Troilus and Cressida;* while speeches in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are indicative in the strongest way of a deep-seated weariness and nausea of the self-complacent optimism of everyday respectability and worldly success. A rather gloomy philosophy of life, by no means wholly free from fatalism, emerges from such plays as *Measure for Measure, Othello,* and even *Romeo and Juliet,* in which the most vital issues are shown to be woven inextricably into the merest chapter of accidents. Shakespeare had seen too much of life at first hand to ignore or underrate the value of luck. But in his most typical moods, especially, perhaps, in his later plays, what amazes us is the centrality and the serenity of his point of view. Shakespeare—this one point is clear—had always been a clean and strenuous worker. The incentive to be active and to *do* things had kept him out of the dark corners which are as likely eventually to warp the artist as to dissolve the man. Charles Lamb was fortunate in his epithet when he wrote of Shakespeare's plays as "this manly book." Of the sickly, decadent "cast of thought" which has come to pervade so much of our literature, there is absolutely no trace in Shakespeare. Such modern subjects as ugly disease and painful mediocrity, the *bête humaine* or the hideous lusts and morbidities which humanity in all ages



FROM THE PAINTING BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A.

MALVOLIO AND THE COUNTESS

Twelfth Night, Act III, Sc. 4



has shrouded—such subjects were wholly foreign to Shakespeare's psychological palette. Enormously liberal as he was in almost every way, he yet had a thoroughly healthy dislike of the abnormal. The *lusus naturæ* had not superlative attraction for him; his choice of theme was reserved for strong, potent, and energetic types of the human species.

Nor has he much tolerance in practical things for the blurring of the line of demarcation between good and evil: they appeared to him in a well enough defined contrast, and the absolute triumph of evil or wickedness must clearly have appeared to him something in the nature of the abnormal. He faces such problems squarely, for there is in him none of that pre-occupation with and insistence upon the beauty of nature upon which modern poets harp. "What he loves as an artist is power—intensity—in human character. It may be power of intellect or moral power, or power of passion or of grace, or the intensity of the exquisite as in Ariel, or power of love as in Imogen, or power of wit as in Benedick, or intensity of stupidity as in Sir Andrew Aguecheek, whose silliness approaches the sublime; but it is always the intense, the perfect in some kind, that he dwells upon and makes central. Splendid and puissant personalities are the primary material of his tragedies, giants of wit or silliness of his comedy. If we put aside the morbid, there is only one form of the extreme in human character which he practically never makes use of, and that is the extremely brutal. The merely bestial he disregards entirely. Yet his characters, splendid or extreme as they are, are never extravagant or abnormal in their nature; they are rather perfected types of the normal. We may fairly say that Shakespeare sought for the highest expressions of the normal in humanity. But of mere mediocrities Shakespeare makes but little use. He relegates them to the background, and uses them as foils



and explanatory notes. Mediocrity may be complex; but Shakespeare has not the modern love of the complex as such, though he masters it when he pleases. He prefers a complexity that is not commonplace, like that of Hamlet. Mediocrity may be tragic or pathetic; but Shakespeare prefers the pathos of Imogen and the tragedy of Lear. The man who is dull, but not dull enough to be altogether laughable, the man whose summed virtues make up respectability, whose actions are reducible to fear, who can neither dare nor enjoy freely, is not a subject of Shakespeare's art. He is included and passed over." [1] The test of his writing is that it braces us for effort, enlarges our thoughts towards charity, and ennobles our feelings. Enrichers of the fancy, Charles Lamb calls these plays, "strengtheners of virtue, a withdrawing from all selfish and mercenary thoughts and actions, to teach courtesy, benignity, generosity, humanity: for of examples teaching these virtues his pages are full." No one is debased or depressed by Shakespeare, for there is nothing base or cowardly in him. His are the darkness and terror of crag and precipice, and his, too, the exhilaration of the summits.

Coriolanus was one of three plays in which Shakespeare used Plutarch as a prop as he had previously used Holinshed, probably with the intention of saving himself trouble, and merely dramatising historical narratives. But in every case (especially that of *Antony and Cleopatra*,[2]

[1] *Age of Shakespeare*, vol. ii. pp. 127-8.

[2] *Antony and Cleopatra* is perhaps only not the greatest of all Shakespeare's tragedies because the theme is smaller and has less reach than the themes of *Hamlet* or *Lear*, and because it is perhaps exceptionally lacking in concentration and unity. In *Pericles* and *Timon* of near this same date (1607-9) we are surprised a little to find Shakespeare recurring to his earlier manner of somewhat breathless and haphazard collaboration.



which combines the highest qualities of history and tragedy with an alacrity in careless construction that is truly Shakespearean) he was caught in the web of his own imagination, and irresistibly impelled in view of the climax to put forth the full strength that was in him. After *Coriolanus,* Shakespeare's pre-occupation with the gravest issues ends, and he creates for us a new type of play—the "romance" (*Cymbeline, Winter's Tale, Tempest,* 1610-12), in the direction of which it is possible that his mind may have been turned by the immense success of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster.* Finally, on the eve of his retirement in 1612-13, he wrote some scenes for a pageant play of *Henry VIII.,* and a few shreds [1] to be woven into the texture of *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* by John Fletcher (who was now thirty-four to his forty-nine), the rising hope and crown prince, as it were, both of the "company" and the play-going circle of which Will Shakespeare had so long been the undisputed *roi-soleil.* Stratford and rest at last! He had realised the most normal ambition of the strong man—returning to the home of his youth with the fortune that he had made in the centre of competition. His balance was drawn. He had written "settled" at the foot of the account, and we

[1] Including, we are fain to believe, the opening song "Roses, their sharp spines being gone," which seems not unworthy of a place in the exquisite nosegay of Shakespeare songs, embracing as this does:—

"O mistress mine, where are you roaming?"
"Fear no more the heat of the sun,"
"Where the bee sucks,"
"Sigh no more, ladies,"
"Blow, blow, blow, thou winter wind,"
"Take, O take those lips away,"
"Full fathom five," and
"Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings."



know what his old player-comrades thought of him: "Our Shakespeare," "so worthy a friend and fellow,"

> Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
> To see thee in our waters yet appeare!

"Of Shakespeare, *our countryman,*" wrote his rival Ben Jonson, with honest pride,

> I loved the man, and do honour his memory. . . .
> Soule of the Age
> The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage.

All the time that he was producing his early masterpieces, by which in his capacity as author he is estimated to have earned some £20 a year,[1] Shakespeare in his capacity of actor was effectively hoarding money.

In 1597 he bought for £60 the largest house in Stratford, known as New Place, "a pratty house of bricke and tymbre," built for Sir Hugh Clopton in 1496. The lack of repair accounted for the low prices. The house was occupied by Queen Henrietta Maria and her suite for three weeks during 1643; but the foundations of the mansion are unhappily all that at present remain. Henceforth we have plentiful details of the dramatist's investments in land at Stratford, of his purchase of the local tithes, of his lawsuits with debtors and others,[2] and of his good fortune in securing two proprietary shares in the Globe Theatre (worth £200 a year each). As Bagehot remarked, "The reverential character of Englishmen has

[1] Multiply by at least six to bring to modern values. As a player between 1590 and 1599 Mr. Sidney Lee estimates that Shakespeare made, on the average, £115 per annum (*Life of Shakespeare*, Library Edition, p. 159).

[2] "As is common among men of wealth," says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare stood rigorously by his rights in all business relations, and often appeared as plaintiff in the local courts."



carefully preserved what they thought the great excellence of their poet, that he made a fortune." In 1615 "Willi. Shakspeare, gentleman," is registered in Stow's *Annales* as one of the most excellent of present poets. The poet's only son, Hamnet, was buried at Stratford in 1596. The theory that Shakespeare was long separated from his family is gratuitous, but it is reasonable to believe that from this date onwards new ties arose to knit him to Stratford,[1] and after his retirement he settled there, having disposed of his theatre shares, and sunk nearly all his capital in house property and real estate in his native town. He was keenly interested in the domestic affairs of his two daughters; the eldest, Susanna (his heiress), had married in 1607 John Hall, a rising physician, of Puritan leanings, by whom she had, in 1608, a daughter, Elizabeth, the poet's only grandchild that lived to maturity.[2] The younger daughter, Judith, married in February, 1616, a Stratford vintner named Thomas Quiney, and Shakespeare is said to have made merry at her wedding; she survived the Restoration, dying at Stratford February 9th, 1662. The increasing Puritan atmosphere of the place must have been rather oppressive to the poet. By 1622 the Stratford town

[1] The poet's father, whose finances this prosperous son is believed to have eased considerably, died in 1601, when Shakespeare became the head of the family: his mother, "Mary Shaxspere," seven years later (Sept. 1608); his younger brother Edmund, who, like himself, was an actor, was buried in Southwark, in December, 1607.

[2] This Elizabeth married as her second husband, in 1647, Sir John Barnard, of Abington, near Northampton, and at her death in February, 1670, she was the last surviving descendant of the poet, whose Stratford property she had inherited just previously to her second marriage. The poet's own widow, Anne Shakespeare, died on August 6th, 1623, *æt.* 67. She was buried near her husband (though not in the same grave) in the Stratford chancel. John Hall's very curious medical *Observations* were issued posthumously in 1657.



council were so square-toed that they actually bribed the King's Players (Shakespeare's old company) to leave the place without giving a performance!

The precise manner of the poet's death is uncertain. His will, still preserved in the Prerogative Office, London, is dated March 25th, 1616. His handwriting—never at all good, if we may judge from the five signatures that have been preserved—is feeble, shaky, and imperfect. In estimating his orthography, however, we must remember that he learned handwriting when that art was at its nadir in England, long after the good old legal hand had gone out, and before the fine Italian penmanship had come in, and when the terrors of abbreviations and parafes were in full swing. His death did not occur until April 23rd, just four weeks after the signature of the will (he was buried on the 25th); this interval impairs the tradition circulated fifty years later, that the poet died of a fever contracted at a merry meeting with Drayton and Ben Jonson. The burial of Chaucer in Westminster Abbey was a more or less accidental circumstance; but the interment of Spenser and Beaumont near his ashes had given a new sanction in Elizabethan times to the idea that the Abbey might become in time a kind of Santa Croce of English poets. So within six years of Shakespeare's death we get the pastoral poet William Basse lamenting the exile of Shakespeare's bones in distant Stratford:

> Renownèd Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
> To learned Beaumont; and rare Beaumont, lie
> A little nearer Chaucer, to make room
> For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb.

These lines appealed strongly to the imagination of contemporaries. Ben Jonson, writing in the following year, repudiated the idea of "bidding Beaumont lie a little further," for he said, addressing Shakespeare, "Thou art



a monument, without a tomb." Sepulchred in his works, Shakespeare, as Milton claimed. with a glance back at the same sonnet,

> in such pomp dost lie
> That kings for such a tomb would wish to die;

and Basse's own ultimate wish is that probably shared by the great multitude of the dramatist's worshippers,

> Sleep, brave Tragedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone.

It was not until the subsequent interments of Drayton and Ben Jonson that the neighbourhood of Chaucer's monument in the Abbey became definitely consecrated as "Poets' Corner."

Shakespeare's bust [1] above the tomb, on the north chancel wall of Stratford Church (erected by the family within six years of his decease), and his portrait engraved by Martin Droeshout prefixed to the first folio edition of his works in 1623 (which, as interpreted to some extent by the so-called Droeshout painting at Stratford, seems to us the most interesting and probably authentic of the portraits) confirm in a general way Aubrey's statement that Shakespeare was "a handsome well-shap't man." If the opinion of competent judges may be taken, the bust was executed from a cast taken after death. The colours, renewed in 1749, were originally taken from life, and, until whitewashed in 1793 (owing to the unpardonable

[1] Executed by a well-known London sculptor of Dutch extraction named Gerard Johnson. The original pen and first finger (prey of some harpy) have been restored; otherwise the bust is substantially unchanged since its erection about 1620. William Morris laughs at the Droeshout picture: "It can't be like Shakespeare, because *it isn't like a man*." The "Felton" portrait, in my opinion, deserves more study than it has yet been accorded.



presumption of Malone), represented the poet exactly as he appeared to his contemporaries. The large dome-shaped forehead is the most striking feature of the image, the colours of which were restored in 1861. The eyes are a bright hazel, the hair and beard auburn; the doublet scarlet, covered with a loose black sleeveless gown. Shakespeare's hands, in one of which is a quill, repose on a cushion, and beneath this is an inscription in indifferent Latin, likening Shakespeare to a Nestor for judgment, a Socrates for genius,[1] and a Virgil for art:

> **Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,**
> **Terra tegit, populus mæret, Olympus habet.**

Then come three couplets in English:

> **Stay, passenger, why goest thou by so fast?**
> **Read, if thou canst, whom envious Death hath placed**
> **Within this monument; Shakespeare: with whom**
> **Quick nature died; whose name doth deck this tomb**
> **Far more than cost; sith all that he hath writ**
> **Leaves living art but page to serve his wit;**

while on the ground above the grave itself, near the north wall of the chancel, is the well-known *siste viator* appeal to the sexton:

> **Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbeare**
> **To digg the dost encloased heare;**
> **Bleste be Ye man Yt spares thes stones,**
> **And corst be he Yt moves my bones.**

The poet died within a few days of the immortal author of *Don Quixote;* he had just completed his fifty-second year, and was thus of the same age as Molière and Napoleon.

[1] A reference is intended no doubt to the familiar *daimon* of Socrates.



FROM THE PAINTING BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A.

THE PLAY SCENE

Hamlet, Act II, Sc. 2



mine of wealth to a successful piratical printer. The question was how to get hold of a copy of a likely play. The original manuscript would be jealously guarded by the theatre proprietors. Two courses would appear to have presented themselves to piratical adventurers, zealous and willing to surmount any obstacle. One was to get at either an impoverished actor or some one behind the scenes at the Globe and persuade him to procure an acting copy: another was to send reporters to the theatre and get them to take down an outline in rough shorthand. The two methods were in some cases very probably combined. An actor for a small fee would furnish two or three parts in full, the remainder would be patched together and pieced in by the publisher's hack, after two or three visits to the playhouse. The resultant (from some such processes as these) was hurried through the press and sold broadcast at the rate of fivepence or sixpence a copy. The circulation must have been rapid and extensive, but so fugitive is literature of this kind that at the present day a Shakespeare quarto hardly ever comes into the market, and when it does it fetches an enormous price.[2] The only really good collections are in the British Museum and the Bodleian, and in the libraries of the Duke of Devonshire and Trinity College, Cambridge.

The quartos vary greatly in merit, but none of them can claim to be very correct. In no case can we suppose one to have been corrected by a thoroughly competent hand, still less by Shakespeare himself. Correction of proofs by authors does not appear to have been an ordinary practice in Elizabeth's time, but, even if it had, we could hardly expect Shakespeare to have corrected playbooks issued in defiance of his wishes. Once printed, the publishers seem to have taken no further pains about securing completeness or accuracy. As a rule each succeeding quarto was printed off from the one next preceding it. Such corrections as were made

[2] The Lund quarto of *Titus Andronicus*, 1594, was sold to America in January, 1905, for £2,000. Concerning the author of this play, consult John M. Robertson's *Did Shakespeare write Titus Andronicus?* He finds strong traces of Greene and Peele (possibly Kyd) in the play, but very little of Shakespeare. *Cf.* Grosart's edition of *Selimus* (Temple Classics).



were executed by ignorant and irresponsible hands, fresh blunders crept in, and the text deteriorated steadily. Such as they were, these quarto playbooks were the only form in which the dramatist was accessible to readers down to 1623. They are consequently very important. Appended is a list of the first quarto editions of single plays between 1597 and the appearance of the first folio in 1623; an attempt has further been made to indicate the relations which the quartos bear one to another, and to the collective edition of Shakespeare's plays in folio in 1623.

(1) *An Excellent conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet*, 1597. The first quarto, an imperfect, shortened, and unauthorised reporter's draft, was "newly corrected, augmented and amended" in 1599. This latter is a vastly improved text of a play which had probably been strengthened in the interval. From it was printed the third quarto (Q3) in 1609. From this last the folio version was derived with changes usually for the worse. There is a fourth quarto, undated, with useful corrections; and a fifth, dated 1637. The received text is largely that of the last quarto, but is in many places conjectural.

(2) *The Tragedy of King Richard the third. Containing his treacherous plots . . . with the whole course of his detested life and most deserved death*, 1597. The first quarto appears to have been (thongh the point is very obscure) a shortened and revised copy of the original play, of which we get the nearest idea in the 1623 or folio version. Subsequent quartos appeared 1598, 1602, 1605, 1612, 1622, 1629, 1634, each for the most part copying its predecessor and progressively deteriorating. The *textus receptus* is based on the folio with substantial additions from Q1. The modern texts vary a good deal.

(3) *The Tragedie of King Richard the Second*, 1597. Reprinted 1598, with some blunders added, and again, with additions (the deposition scene), in 1608. The 1608 quarto was issued first with a title-page not mentioning the additions, then with a title-page in which they are mentioned. The fourth quarto of 1615, used in printing the folio text, is a mere reprint of that of 1608, but the copy used was corrected, in MS., by a good acting copy, and the folio is thus purged of many errors ac-



cumulated by successive quartos, and is on the whole the best text. The 1634 quarto was printed from the second folio (F2.)

(4) *A Pleasant Conceited Comedie called Love's labors Lost . . . newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespeare*, 1598. The folio version is a reprint from this (Q1) divided into acts. Both versions contain mistakes of their own, but the folio is rather more carefully printed. Q2 was printed from F1 in 1631.

(5) *The Historie of Henrie the fourth with the battel at Shrewsburie . . . with the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstaffe*, 1598. This is the standard text of the play, and was reprinted in successive quartos 1599, 1604, 1608, 1613, 1622, 1632, and 1639. The folio differs from the quartos for the worse, though it corrects a few typographical errors and has a division into acts and scenes.

(6) *The Second part of Henrie the fourth . . . with the humours of Sir John Falstaffe and swaggering Pistoll*, 1600. The *textus receptus* is a combination of the quarto and the folio version, which supplement each other in a valuable manner, the former probably representing the purer and less sophisticated text, the latter contributing some fine additional lines.

(7) *The Chronicle History of Henry the fift. With his battel fought at Agin Court in France . . .* 1600 (Q2 1602, Q3 1608). The quartos alike are imperfect and almost valueless for comparison. They were probably vamped up from notes taken at a performance of the play in a shortened form. The folio supplies the *textus receptus*.

(8) *The most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreame cruelltie of Shylocke . . .* 1600 (Roberts Q1) and 1600 (Heyes Q2): two versions distinguished by the rival publishers' names. "Nothwithstanding some worsenesses," says Dr. Furnivall, "the betterness of the second quarto is established." From it the first folio text was printed in 1623, with a few insignificant corrections and some added blunders. The "Heyes" quarto was reprinted in 1637 (Q3); reissued with new title-page in 1652 (Q4).

(9) *Much adoe About Nothing*, 1600. The folio ver-



sion is a reprint of this, with alterations and blunders as usual, and with the acts marked for the first time.

(10) *A Midsommer nights dreame*, 1600. Two quartos were printed in this year, one by Fisher (Q1), the other by James Roberts (Q2). The folio text is based on the latter (which is better printed if less authentic), with some conjectural alterations. The received text is a combination.

(11) *A most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie of Syr John Falstaffe and the merrie Wives of Windsor . . .* 1602. This version and that of the folio convict each other of serious imperfections. Both probably derive from a common original no longer extant. The modern text, as is not infrequently the case, represents a degradation of the author's work. The quarto version is probably a report by a literary hack from a shortened stage version. Q2 (1619), a reprint of Q1, was followed by Q3 (1630), a reprint from the folio. The *textus receptus* is mainly that of the folio.

(12) *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke*, by William Shake-speare, 1603. This version (Q1) is a piratical and carelessly transcribed copy of Shakespeare's first draft of the play, in which the dramatist drew largely upon an old piece called *Hamlet's Revenge*. A revised version greatly enlarged and amended "according to the true and perfect copy" appeared in 1604 (Q2). This again was roughly printed from a curtailed acting copy. The folio text came nearer to the original; it also followed an acting copy which had been cut down for representation, but the cuts were less drastic and in different places as compared with those of Q2. The *textus receptus*, long based upon F1 almost exclusively, is now based upon a combination of it and Q2. Later quartos appeared in 1605. 1611. an undated quarto (Q5) about 1615, and 1637 (Q6).

(13) *Mr. William Shake-speare: His True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three daughters*, 1608, two quarto editions, both printed for N. Butter. The first, known as the "Pide Bull" edition, was made up of corrected and uncorrected sheets indiscriminately, so that scarcely two copies are alike in all respects. The second, known as the "N. Butter" edition,



is a reprint of a copy of the first which contained some of the uncorrected sheets. A third quarto, 1655, is a bad reprint of the second. The folio text is somewhat shorter but very superior to the quartos: it was probably printed from one of them heavily corrected from a manuscript in possession of the theatre.

(14) *The (Famous) Historie of Troylus and Cresseid* (Excellently expressing the beginning of their loves with the conceited wooing of Pandarus Prince of Licia) as it was acted at the Globe, by William Shakespeare, 1609. A surreptitious version. When the printer was rebuked for printing it "as acted at the Globe" he cancelled the phrase and substituted the words in brackets on the title, adding an extraordinary preface. The folio version was printed from this with a few variations and additions. The received text has, however, been improved by the aid of the quarto.

(15) *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moore of Venice*, 1622 (Q2 1630). Printed "after the author's death" by Thos. Walkley, who says in his *Epistle* (a book without an Epistle is like "A Blew Coat without a Badge") that "the author's name is sufficient to vent his work." The folio text is fuller and better than that of the quarto.

There are first editions (sometimes not quite perfect) of all the above in the British Museum with the exception of *Richard II.* and *The Merry Wives.*

Quartos also appeared during Shakespeare's lifetime of *Titus Andronicus* (1594 and 1600) and *Pericles* (1609 and 1611). There were thus seventeen quartos in all.

It will be sufficiently seen from the foregoing (which has been most kindly looked over by Mr. P. A. Daniel) that the text of the quartos is in nearly every case corrupt. There was no proper editorial supervision in their preparation, and being intended merely for the accommodation of the playgoers (and the convenience of actors who preferred to have their parts in print), very little trouble of any kind was expended upon them. Bad as they are, we should, but for them, have been the inheritors of an infinitely worse text of Shakespeare than the "tolerably good" one which we do actually possess. In many cases the quartos proved to be the best versions available for the printers, when Shakespeare's

plays came to be collected; in others, they have proved of the utmost value to modern commentators in amending the text.

Had we not been steeled, through adversity, against the infirmity (to which so many critics are prone) of looking into a modern looking-glass for Shakespeare, we might be inclined to exclaim, What a remarkable thing that the dramatist during the four years of his retirement should not have prepared an edition of his own plays for the press! He might even have found time, at least, to have commenced an autobiography. We may all be allowed to share the pious regret of his fellow-actors John Heminge and Henrie Condell: "It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings."[1] On the other hand it is possibly just as well that the manuscripts should not have been entrusted to him at Stratford. The greatest authors have occasionally proved incompetent revisers of their own writings, while early work that they deem "immature" is notoriously unsafe in their hands.

Some years elapsed after Shakespeare's death before anything was done to bring out a collective edition of his plays. Two things were needed for such an enterprise, money and the goodwill of the theatre proprietors, who had in their possession the manuscripts of the twenty Shakespearean plays which had not yet appeared separately in print. The requisite conjuncture of circumstances was apparently brought about in the following way. Shortly after Shakespeare died a printer called William Jaggard (who had already made money by publishing *The Passionate Pilgrim* in Shakespeare's name) absorbed a smaller printer called James Roberts, who printed the players' bills. Jaggard was thus brought into contact with the theatre proprietors, Heminge and Condell, whom he eventually convinced of the credit, not without profit, that would accrue from the publication of the popular plays of the deceased dramatist. Jaggard and his newly found allies were unwilling to incur the whole risk, so they brought into the Shakespeare publication syndicate three additional booksellers (or publishers), Aspley, Smethwick, and Edward Blount, a man of some culture and an old friend of Marlowe's. William Jaggard shared the printer's work with his son Isaac. The nominal sponsors for this memorable literary venture were the two sleeping partners, Heminge and Condell.

[1] In the "Epistle Dedicatorie" to the first folio.



John Heminge is supposed to have come from Shakespeare's native town of Stratford and to have created the part of Falstaff; Henry Condell was his partner in the proprietorship of the Globe and was great as the Cardinal in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. Shakespeare left mourning rings to them both in his will. They seem (from their advertisement to the Shakespeare volume) to have thoroughly recognised Shakespeare's utter pre-eminence. This is their great merit. They were very slow in getting to work. They probably talked freely of their great labours and their dear old friend Will Shakespeare in the Bankside taverns. Beyond this their labours were apparently confined to the selection of copies of the plays from the theatre library for the use of the printers. Some of these were apparently theatre copies which had been curtailed for representation; one or two (*e.g. The Tempest*) may have been prompt copies in the author's own hand. When printed quartos were available, they were generally used, with a few marginal corrections. In other cases transcripts of plays in private hands were used. The correction of the press was, there is little reason to doubt, left to the reader of Jaggard's printing house, who certainly could not have exercised any extraordinary vigilance in his vocation. Abbreviations were then freely used in writing, and these were very carelessly and imperfectly interpreted. The result was a rather slovenly and dilapidated text, especially in certain plays in which no quartos exist—*Coriolanus*, *All's Well*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony*. On the other hand, the exclusive folio text of *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* and *Julius Cæsar* is exceptionally good.

With all its imperfections thick upon it, the famous first folio (F1) issued from Jaggard's press towards the close of 1623. Twenty plays were printed in it for the first time.[1] These were:

The Tempest.
The two Gentlemen of Verona.

[1] The licence from the Stationers' Company was obtained on November 8, 1623. The title ran: *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies.* (Portrait "Martin Droeshout, sculpsit, London.") London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623.



Measure for Measure.
The Comedy of Errours.
As You Like It.
The Taming of the Shrew.
All is well, that Ends Well.
Twelfe-Night, or what you will.
The Winters Tale.
The Life and Death of King John.
Henry the Sixt. Parts I., II., and III.
The Life of King Henry VIII.
The Tragedy of Coriolanus.
Timon of Athens.
The Life and death of Julius Cæsar.
The Tragedy of Macbeth.
Anthony and Cleopater.
Cymbeline King of Britaine.

The only play previously published as by Shakespeare and now excluded was *Pericles*. (It is just possible that a stationer with printing rights over this play prevented its inclusion.) Thirty-six pieces were thus brought together. The volume consisted of nearly 1000 double-column pages, and copies (of which something like 200 are probably still in existence) were sold at £1. The plays are arranged in "A Catalogue" (*i.e.* contents table) under three headings—Comedies, Histories, Tragedies. Each section is separately paged. The histories are arranged in the order of the kings chronicled, the other two sections in a promiscuous manner.[1] This arrangement has been followed in subsequent collective editions.

Heminge and Condell were careless editors, but they must have known quite well which plays deserved to be called (and would be accepted by the public of the time as) Shakespeare's. The first folio has therefore the greatest possible weight in determining the Shakespearean canon. It contains a few plays only in part by Shakespeare—*Henry VI.*, *Timon*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Henry VIII.*; but the mere fact that they are included points powerfully to the conclusion that the dramatist had some considerable share in the least Shakespearean of them. The fact that *Pericles*, *Two Noble Kins-*

[1] *Troilus and Cressida* was accidentally omitted from the contents table.



men, and *Edward III.* are omitted tells no less strongly against our regarding them as Shakespearean in more than a secondary manner.

The second folio edition was reprinted from the first with a few (for the most part) valueless corrections in 1632. Both Charles I. and Charles II. had copies of this edition, and the former made good use of his (though Milton pointed out that he ought to have studied *Richard III.* to better advantage). The third folio was printed in 1663-4 with the addition of seven plays: *Pericles; The London Prodigall; The History of Thomas Lord Cromwell; Sir John Oldcastle; Lord Cobham; The Puritan Widow; A Yorkshire Tragedy; The Tragedy of Locrine.* The attribution of these last six pieces to Shakespeare was quite erroneous. The fourth folio of 1685 reproduces the third with a slight modernisation of the spelling, and with a good many additional misprints. These blunders proved signally noxious owing to the fact that the early editors, Nicholas Rowe (1709), Alexander Pope (1725), and Sir Thomas Hanmer (1744), generally used the fourth folio as the basis of their text.[1] The modern tendency is to attach more and more credence to the readings of the first folio.

The books written about Shakespeare are legion. Of the monthly lists of Accessions printed by the British Museum Library a number rarely appears without two or three entries under the heading "Shakespeare, William." Of the yearly crop a comparatively small number are books by literary critics; for Shakespeare has become degraded in use from a subject for our quickest and best intellects down to a rubbish-tip for our worst and most inveterate faddists. A series of curious hallucinations and crazes have swept in succession over the study of Shakespeare. One, of French origin, which persisted long and obtained wide currency owing to the loud authoritative voice of Voltaire, was that Shakespeare was a kind of inspired rustic, whose habitual gibbering was diversified by great moments of genuine poetry. Another was that

[1] Some important emendations were suggested by Lewis Theobald in 1733. The most valuable of all (*Henry V.* II. iii. 17), "and a' babbled of green fields," was more than hinted at in a marginal note by a friend, "and a' talked of green fields." This famous emendation seems almost too brilliant to be sound.



Shakespeare was the unrecognised and much-persecuted victim of Ben Jonson and other dramatists of the age. Allied with this was the German theory of Shakespeare's isolation among the dramatists of the period, and the exaggerated theory of Shakespeare's art, the very rudenesses and nodosities of which were nothing less than additional beauties. This was followed in the mid-nineteenth century by an extraordinary mania for the discovery of Shakespeare symbolism, together with a strong inclination to the psychological fallacy that Shakespeare's choice of tragic or comic themes must have been conditioned by the immediate circumstances of his life. Not only was each play discovered to represent some distinct ethical teaching, a parable in the disguise of a play, but almost every character of importance was discovered to conceal a satire upon some contemporary rival or enemy. In a similar spirit Shakespeare's dramatic blank verse has been subjected to every kind of possible and impossible "metrical test," while his acts and scenes have been pulled about to suit the exigencies of the latest theories of Elizabethan staging. These ingenious, but for the most part faded, speculations have given place to passionate altercations upon the inner meaning and significance of the sonnets —the debate concentrating upon the interpretation of the cryptic dedication addressed to the only begetter, Mr. W. H., by the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth, T. T. One can read now with nothing short of intense amusement, the grand discovery by the French discoverer, M. Philarète Chasles, acclaimed with perfect solemnity by the *Athenæum*, the *Westminster*, and *Saturday* Reviews, and by a consensus of learned opinion, that the mystic W. H. meant nothing more nor less than "William Himself." *Voilà la symbolique des sonnets!* Another craze (initiated by people who seem to have known Shakespeare alone among great authors, and to have ignored that extraordinary faculty of assimilation which is practically indispensable to all great creative artists, constituting, in fact, the kind of literary second sight which distinguishes an author from another) is that because Shakespeare has written so well about travel, about seafaring, about soldiering, about women, about angling, about litigation, about the Bible, etc., etc., therefore he must have been a great traveller, a sailor, a soldier, a woman, an angler, a lawyer, a Protestant divine and the like, himself. This exquisite folly



reached its climax in 1857, in a book by Delia Bacon to prove that Lord Bacon, and not Shakespeare, really wrote the plays commonly attributed to the latter. Shakespeare, it is plain, was not a sedentary man, or a man of study, or an inns of court man; on the contrary, he was an open-air man, a man of affairs, and a sportsman, but he had that peculiar, that compelling, and that much-abused power of transmitting thoughts and impressions by means of ink and paper which distinguishes the literary man from the non-literary man. Like all great authors, he uttered a vast quantity of truth without knowing it; he delivers *obiter dicta* in cases of which he never even heard, and pours forth profound opinions on many subjects of which practically he knew nothing.

The explanation of these crazes is not recondite; they are the direct outcome of the extravagance of Shakespeare eulogists. So inseparable from the abuse of a cult is the fungoid growth of dissent. With singular shortness of sight the votaries of the poet have represented him as (1) virtually flawless; (2) so comprehensive as to be practically universal. The converse of these propositions is probably nearer to the truth. As Vauvenargues said, "Les plus grands ouvrages de l'esprit humain sont très-assurément les moins parfaits." A faultless author would be not human but divine. As Jonson, the most epigrammatic, and Johnson, the sanest of his critics, pointed out, Shakespeare is full of faults; among these are conspicuous carelessness, profusion, and extravagance. He suffered from what Leigh Hunt calls a super-fœtation of thought, and his work at times from an ultra-luxuriance of imagination and metaphorical illustration. His partiality for the "purple patch" is inconsistent with that purity of taste which we begin to recognize as essentially Hellenic. He strains language to the point of obscurity or slovenliness, neglects rudimentary plausibility of plot or of chronological coherence ("Panting Time toils after him in vain"), sacrifices dramatic propriety and instancy to bravura and rhetoric, or, worse still, to scandalous quibbles and ignominious puns. His plays were written in the first instance for the theatre of his day. He knew his audiences and actors, and made concessions to both, to the detriment of his work. Caring little for formal completeness, he rarely consented to subordinate all his detail to his main design. If an episode or a character did not fully rouse his imagination, he wrote well enough for his audience



and was content.[1] Shakespeare, again, is anything but universal. His love of authority and contempt for the "mutable rank-scented many" are essentially Tudor and pre-Armada sentiments. His power, then and now, is largely a corollary of the fact that he was so perfect a representative of his age and country. Like every very great writer, Shakespeare has an energetic people behind him. While uttering supremely what he himself thinks and feels, he is at the same time uttering what is felt and thought most deeply by the best minds among his contemporaries.

Among other causes which have contributed to give Shakespeare his position of supremacy, it is possible now to specify only four: (1) His service to the common speech of Englishmen by fixing the functions of new words and enriching the vernacular with new phrases of unrivalled pith and potency; (2) the exquisite alternations of quickness and emphasis, of verisimilitude and beauty, of touch-and-go playfulness and solemn music, of comic and tragic tone which he obtains by turning from prose to verse, or *vice versa*, every such change being consciously or unconsciously modulated and motived; (3) the consummation of dramatic blank verse in his hands between 1600 and 1612—increasing vibration and flexibility, unlimited variety of music and expression, the double-ending and varied pause so regulated as to set up a continuous flow of vital rhythm; (4) his powerful double appeal in each successive age to play-goer and student.

Among the shoals of modern Shakespeare books, upon the genesis of which we have thus endeavoured to throw a ray of light, we select those for mention which we should like every genuine Shakespeare student to possess:

Editions with Variorum Notes: "Boswell's Malone" * (24

[1] See Stephen's *Studies of a Biographer*, iv. 8; Seccombe and Allen, *Age of Shakespeare*, 1904, ii. 128-31; *Bookman*, October, 1903. The present chapter has been most kindly read by, among others, Mr. A. H. Bullen, Mr. Walter Sichel, Dr. J. W. Allen and Dr. Furnival. Both Mr. Bullen and Dr. Furnival dissent from the views expressed in regard to the sonnets at the foot of p. 229; Dr. Allen dissents from the view that *Macbeth* is the least actable of the tragedies; Dr. Furnival disagrees with the view taken of Shakespeare's marriage and with the preference given to *Richard II.* over *King John*.



vols. 1821); Furness's *Variorum* (12 vols.). *Sumptuous Printing:* The Stratford Town Shakespeare, 10 vols. (the 10th vol. to include new critical essays by various hands), printed at Stratford under the care of A. H. Bullen. *Apparatus Criticus:* Cambridge Edition, 1863-6, or 1893; The Arden Shakespeare; The Bankside (20 vols.). *Facsimiles:* First Folio * (Clarendon Press, 1902) and Poems (1905); Furnivall's *Shakespeare-Quarto Facsimiles* (40 vols.). *One-Volume Text:* Globe Edition (since 1891 with good Glossary); Leopold Shakespeare * (with Furnivall's introduction). *Pocket Play-per-Volume Editions:* The First Folio Edition (40 vols.); The Little Quarto Edition (40 vols.). *Sources:* Douce's *Illustrations of Shakespeare* (1807 and 1839); J. Hunter's *New Illustrations* (1845); Collier and Hazlitt's *Shakespeare Library*, 1875; Skeat's *Shakespeare's Plutarch*, 1875; Boswell-Stone's *Shakespeare's Holinshed*, 1896; Ander's *Shakespeare Books*, 1903. *Lexicons and Grammars:* A. Schmidt's *Shakespeare Lexicon* (1874); J. Bartlett's *Concordance*, 1895; E. A. Abbott's *Shakespearean Grammar;* Franz's *Shakespeare Grammatik;* Fleay and Dowden's Handbooks. *Lives:* J. O. Halliwell-Phillipp's *Outlines* (10th ed. 1898); Sidney Lee's *Life* * (5th ed. 1905), with which should be used as supplementary D. H. Madden's *Diary of Master William Silence*, 1897; C. I. Elton's *Will. Shakespeare, His Family and Friends*, 1904; and J. W. Gray's *Shakespeare's Marriage*, 1905. *Shakespeare Reference: Shakespeare's Centurie of Praise*, 1874; *Fresh Allusions to Shakespeare*, 1886 (New Shakespeare Soc. Publications), and *The Praise of Shakespeare* (ed. Hughes), 1904. *Critics:* Eighteenth century—Johnson's *Preface*, 1765; R. Farmer's *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*, 1767; Nathan Drake's *Shakespeare and His Times*, 1817; see N. Smith's *Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare*). Romantic — Coleridge's *Notes and Lectures* (ed. 1883); Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays;* Schlegel's *Shakespeare and the Drama*, 1815; Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Heine's *Frauen-Gestalten.* Modern—Dowden's *Shakspere, His Mind and Art*, 1875; Brandes's *William Shakespeare*, 1898; A. C. Bradley's *Shakesperean Tragedy* (1904), and Essays by Landor, the *Citation of William Shakespeare* for deer-stealing, and *Imaginary Conversations*, passim), Swinburne, Lowell, Wyndham, Moulton, and A. W. Ward. Foreign—Kreyssig, Brandl, Mezières, Stapfer, Beljame, and Jusserand.



CHAPTER IX

THE LATER CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS OF SHAKESPEARE

"Of the later dramatists, I think Beaumont and Fletcher rank next to Shakespeare in the amount of pleasure they give, though not in the quality of it, and in fanciful charm of expression. In spite of all their coarseness, there is a delicacy, a sensibility, an air of romance, and above all, a grace in their best works that make them for ever attractive to the young, and to all those who have learned to grow old amiably."

—J. R. LOWELL, *Old English Dramatists.*

Beaumont and Fletcher—Ben Jonson—*Volpone*—*The Alchemist*—Jonson's later comedies—Chapman—Marston—Dekker—Middleton—Heywood—Webster—Tourneur—Ford — Massinger—Shirley.

As to the gulf which separates Shakespeare from his fellow Elizabethans the opinion of Alexander Dyce, perhaps the most thorough-going student of the old English drama that we can boast, is well worth hearing. "Lamb and Hazlitt," he says, "have on the whole exaggerated the general merits of the dramatists of Elizabeth and James's days. 'Shakespeare,' says Hazlitt, 'towered above his fellows in shape and gesture proudly eminent, but he was one of a race of giants, the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful and beautiful of them; but it was a common and a noble brood.' A falser remark, I conceive, has seldom been made by critic. Shakespeare is not only immeasurably superior to the dramatists of his time in creative power, in insight into the human heart, and in profound thought; but he is moreover utterly unlike them in almost every respect. . . ."



The plays which approach most nearly at any one given point to the current of Shakespearean drama are probably those of Beaumont and Fletcher. But this label of "Beaumont and Fletcher" amounts very often to hardly more than a chronological expression signifying that the plays were written between the accession of James I. and the meeting of the Long Parliament by well-accredited collaborating playwrights of the period. The Beaumont and Fletcher folios of 1647 and 1679 were a kind of large repertory of post-Shakespearean drama, generally romantic in type, but extremely various in point of merit. Beaumont's share in these plays was comparatively small; but both Fletcher and Massinger had a large share in the contents, sometimes writing alone, but more often in collaboration with Middleton, Rowley, and others. Fletcher was an extraordinarily versatile writer, a veritable Proteus of the drama of that day. This renders it extremely difficult to fix his work by internal evidence. The distribution of plays in the Beaumont and Fletcher *corpus* must therefore always remain extremely tentative; and we must be continually on our guard against the eagerness of the specialist to reach definite conclusions in the matter. Roughly speaking, however, there can be no doubt that John Fletcher, who, with the exception of Heywood, was probably the most prolific dramatist of the day, was the protagonist of the plays.

John Fletcher, youngest son of Richard Fletcher, who acted the ungrateful part of chaplain to Mary Stuart in the last days of her life, and eventually became Bishop of London, was born at Rye, in Sussex, in 1579. He was educated at Benet (Corpus) College, Cambridge, and had certainly commenced his literary career in London by the year 1607. It is probable that he began writing for the stage a few years earlier than that. *The Woman's Prize,* a kind



of sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew,* and *Wit at Several Weapons,* both very early plays (1604-6), show the influence of the Lord Chamberlain's company and its great dramatist upon this young recruit to the ranks of the playwriting and theatrical wits.

He seems to have become acquainted with Francis Beaumont not later than 1607, and their first successful play, *The Romance of Philaster,* was probably written between 1608 and 1610. The fluency and versatility of his endowment must have attracted the attention of Shakespeare about the same time; and during 1613 we find Shakespeare contributing scenes and passages to the two predominantly Fletcherian plays of *Henry VIII.* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* In general popularity, facility in writing, and honest love of popular applause, and also in apparent indifference to the final form of his productions, Fletcher seems to have approached the great dramatist more nearly than any other writer of the age. Subsequently he became a close ally of Massinger. He died at the zenith of his fame, a victim of the plague, in August, 1625, and was buried near Massinger in St. Saviour's, Southwark.

Francis Beaumont, the descendant of a good Leicestershire family, famous for its lawyers, was born within the borders of Charnwood Forest at Grace-Dieu in 1584, and was educated at Broadgates Hall, Oxford, whence he migrated to the Inner Temple in 1600. A literary friendship with Ben Jonson, and an intimacy with Fletcher, formed probably much about the same time, brought him into connection with the stage a few years after his settlement in London. In 1605 he inherited part of the property of his elder brother, the poet, Sir John Beaumont; but he seems to have clung to the Bohemian habits of a writer for the stage until at least 1613, when he married a lady of



birth and fortune. Three years later he died (March, 1616), and was buried in Westminster Abbey near Chaucer and Spenser. According to the tradition handed down by Aubrey, the two poets, the Orestes and Pylades of our drama, inhabited the same dwelling on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse, and had everything, including a single cloak, in common.

Of the plays ordinarily attributed to Beaumont and Fletcher, it does not appear probable that more than about twelve were the joint composition of both dramatists. About fifteen others are fairly well ascertained to be by Fletcher alone. The remainder are for the most part by Fletcher and Massinger, with a few minor variations. This first delimitation is based primarily upon the hard facts of chronology. Plays known to have been written after 1616 could manifestly not have been the work of Beaumont. Beaumont's share in the plays previous to this date is decided with a strong colour of plausibility upon internal evidence, which is almost exclusively metrical in character. There is something very distinctive about Fletcher's verse, thoroughly typical of an age which has begun to think itself sophisticated, and to talk of the "last reign," less than ten years since, as *vieux jeu*. Fletcher had to sustain a reputation of being thoroughly modern; one sign of this was to be found in the looseness and carelessness of his line structure. His line runs commonly to eleven, and not infrequently to twelve, thirteen, or even fourteen syllables, and there is little attempt, as in Shakespeare, to redress redundancies of effect by the general balance of a passage. Slipshod methods seem natural to Fletcher. He is exceedingly fond of writing "'em" for "them," and "'tis" for "it is"; his redundant syllables are frequently accented, and he has an exasperating trick of adding a perfectly superfluous monosyllable, such as "sir," to make up his eleven syllables. There is a marked lack of dignity



about the cadence of his verse.[1] We feel instinctively that it was a court coterie and not a strong mixed audience that encouraged such mannerisms. Fletcher, however, was a most versatile artist, and whether in collaboration with Beaumont, by himself, with Massinger, or in some other combination, he was for all tastes, and generally had wit at call. Of all the great battalion of Elizabethan dramatists, he is perhaps the only one (with such very minor exceptions as Day and Field) who reveals a decided genius for frivolity. This quality is seen unmistakably, as we should expect, only in those plays which Fletcher wrote alone. Those written with Beaumont are stained strongly with sentimentality, and elevated by a nobler diction than was habitual to Fletcher alone.

These distinctions will appear in the attempt which we must now make to group and characterise some fifteen of the most notable out of the fifty-odd dramas ordinarily attributed to Beaumont and Fletcher. The earliest of these in point of date (with one exception) are also the most serious and the most emotional in quality; and these are undoubtedly those in which the serio-comic vein of Fletcher was weighted on the serious side of the morally stronger man. The chief of these properly called Beaumont and Fletcher plays were *Philaster*, produced about 1608 (printed 1620), *The Maid's Tragedy* about 1610 (printed 1619), and *A King and No King* in 1611. The predominant part in all these is felt to be that of Beaumont. The

[1] Such a passage as the following is not at all exceptional:

"Go home, good man, and tell your masters from us
We do 'em too much honour to force from 'em
Their barren countries, ruin their waste cities;
And tell 'em, out of love, we mean to leave 'em,
Since they will need be kings, no more to tread on
Than they have able wits, and powers to manage;
And so we shall befriend 'em.—Ha! what does she here?"
—*Humourous Lieutenant*, I. 1.



aim of the dramatists in *Philaster* seems to have been to work a romantic and quasi-tragic vein into comedy of the *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* order. Extravagant though the plot is, the beauty of the descriptions, the poetry of the sentiment, and the sweetness of the verse combine with the novelty of the compound to make the play a very brilliant success, and rendered the two heroines, Euphrasia and Arethusa, conspicuous on the stage for over two centuries. *The Maid's Tragedy* is planned on a scheme equally ambitious with that of *Philaster*. The plot, again, is as inherently improbable as it is unpleasant, and the fluctuations of feeling in Aspatia are very confusedly traced; but the phrasing and diction in this play are finer and more direct than that of anything else by Beaumont and Fletcher. And long delayed though the awakening of Evadne to her shame is, her resoluteness in finally wreaking vengeance is very nobly depicted. The third of these plays, *A King and No King,* is again mainly the work of Beaumont, though the hand of Fletcher is seen in the last two acts, and also in the plot. The subject of this drama is a revolting one, and the chief character, Arbaces, whose monstrous passion is ostensibly the theme of the play, is very crudely worked out. The play survived long, however, on the strength of the admirable portraiture of another Parolles, the cowardly Captain Bessus, with his sword-bearing tutors in the gentle art of evading challenges.

The two plays of importance left to Beaumont and Fletcher are both in a much lighter vein. They are *The Scornful Lady* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle;* the former an early production of a rather coarse and dull texture which owes most of its merit to the *Adelphi* of Terence. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* may probably be attributed to 1611. It is a highly original and very amusing mock-heroic drama, burlesquing the theatrical tastes of the city 'prentices and the theatrical manners of



the Whitehall courtiers with a delightful impartiality. The comic vein is wonderfully well sustained, and the whole piece maintained at one temperature in a manner that is very rare in the Jacobean drama. The levity of Fletcher in combination with the humours of Beaumont afford promise of new conquests in the domain of the drama—frustrated, unhappily, by Beaumont's premature retirement in 1613, and death three years later.

Fletcher's unaided skill is seen in his farcical or semi-farcical comedies or romances, in which his technical adriotness, his extraordinary gift for *blague,* his pretty talent for lyric and idyll, and his irresponsible fancy are seen to full advantage.[1] Joyously funny and cheery again is *Wit with-*

[1] Such were *Monsieur Thomas,* an early play, in which a travelled scapegrace is amusingly characterised; *The Chances* (? 1619), another very popular comedy, with a Cervantes plot of the complicated order then in vogue; *The Humourous Lieutenant* (1619), which sounds like a novel of Marryat's, but relates to the strange case of a lieutenant who fights like Mars when in pain with disease, but is a coward when well. The underplot is whimsical, licentious, and extremely laughable, the racy dialogue often convulsing the reader. *The Pilgrim* (1621), containing a scenario of operatic complexity dominated by the most sparkling of Fletcher's soubrettes, Juletta; *The Beggar's Bush* (1622), an eccentric medley of Cervantic complexity, with Jews and gipsies, fare, parody, and what-not, so charming and "sunshiny" withal that Coleridge declared he could read it all day; and *Rule a Wife and have a Wife* (1624), a clever and amusing comedy of a despised husband who asserts himself (as *Still Waters Run Deep* and *The Walls of Jericho* attest that husbands may still do). Fletcher's two unaided tragedies, *Bonduca* and *Valentinian,* are stagey, declamatory, and unreal, suggesting the talent of a Fragonard exerting itself to produce a St. Sebastian in the style of Guido. Of his work in collaboration with Massinger, the one tragedy of note, *Thierry and Theodoret,* gains enormously in dignity by the association. *The Little French Lawyer, The Spanish Curate,* and *The Custom of the Country,*



out Money. The popularity of this kind is shown in the Rev. W. Cartwright's preference of Fletcher's banter to Shakespeare's wit in the well-known lines:

> **Shakespeare to thee was dull: whose best jest lies**
> **I' th' ladies' questions and the fool's replies;**
> **Nature was all his art; thy vein was free**
> **As his, but without his scurrility.**

Ben Jonson was born in the early part of 1573. His grandfather was a small laird of Annandale, in Scotland, from which place he removed to Carlisle, and was subsequently taken into the service of Henry VIII. His father forfeited his estate under Queen Mary, subsequently became a Protestant minister, and died in 1573. The poet was born in the city of Westminster about a month after his father's death. In 1575 his mother married again a master bricklayer. He was sent to a school at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and showed such remarkable aptitude that he was sent by a friend of the family to Westminster, where William Camden was then second master. His wonderful memory enabled him rapidly to climb into the sixth form. About 1589 he obtained an exhibition, and passed a few months at St. John's College, Cambridge. But his father soon required him in the business, in which he laboured until he found the work too irksome, when he escaped from it, not by returning to Cambridge, but by joining the English army in Flanders as a volunteer. He returned from abroad before he was twenty, found his stepfather dead, took to the London stage for a living, and was entrusted ere long, just as Shakespeare had been, with the altering and

all given between 1618 and 1622, are probably assignable in the main to the exquisite serio-comic vein of Fletcher. In the last-mentioned his verve in working out a whimsical conception triumphs over every obstacle, though the play resulting was so scandalous in its licence that it shocked the sense of propriety of the not too sensitive Mr. Pepys.



repairing of pieces for the stage. Aubrey, with the amazing credulity which characterised his mind, stated that about this time Jonson killed Marlowe, the poet, on Bunhill. The story had this amount of foundation, that on September 22nd, 1598, Jonson fought what he later described as a duel with an actor called Gabriel Spencer, whom he killed. Arrested on a charge of felony, he pleaded guilty; escaped the gallows by benefit of clergy, but underwent a brief imprisonment, in the course of which he adopted the Catholic faith on trust from a "sharking" priest, but abjured it on conviction twelve years later. The incident led to a breach with Henslowe, who was angered by the loss of a promising member of his company. It thus came about that Jonson offered his first extant comedy, *Every Man in his Humour,* not to Henslowe, but to the rival company of Lord Chamberlain's servants. Shakespeare, fresh from the success of *Henry IV.,* may have had something to say in regard to the acceptance of the piece. He certainly took part in the performance, and probably played the part of Knowell when it was given at the Globe in 1598. Jonson, whose work had hitherto been that of an obscure collaborater, henceforth ranked as one of the foremost dramatists of the day. His next two comedies, which, like the first, are very Plautian in character, and turn upon a complicated intrigue into which the satire is introduced more or less as an accident, were next produced, and were well received. But Jonson already set himself up as a censor of literary taste and of the manners of his age. Already he boasted loudly of his superiority to vulgar criticism, and of the fearless hand with which he probed the foibles of his age. An envious howl, of which but the faintest echo still survives, was almost certainly raised upon the first stage triumphs of the youthful Shakespeare. A more formidable cabal was now formed against the pre-



tensions of Ben Jonson. In the stage squabble which followed, and which has been dignified by the sonorous name of "Poetomachia," antagonism to Jonson's arrogance was complicated by the rivalries of theatrical companies and by cross personal feuds to such an extent that it is extremely difficult to get any clear idea of the *mêlée*.

From 1599 to 1602 Jonson was partly occupied in hack work for Henslowe, and partly on the three satirical and literary dramas, *Every Man out of his Humour, Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*. Of these, *Cynthia's Revels*, entirely lacking in substance though it is, is a simply marvellous exercise of literary adroitness and dexterity. In it, too, he seems to approach more nearly than anywhere else to the light touch and the lyrical *abandon* ("Queen and huntress, chaste and fair" is to our mind his most beautiful song), the absence of which is, generally speaking, so conspicuous in his works—"works" too often in the sense that he could not conceal the labour he expended upon them. In 1603 was produced Jonson's earliest extant tragedy, *Sejanus*. A little later he got into trouble for abusing the "industrious Scots" in the delightful city comedy of *Eastward Ho* (in which Chapman and Marston bore a share), but from 1605 down to 1615 he entered upon the most fruitful and the most glorious period of his career. In 1605, the year of *Volpone*, he produced the first of his wonderful masques. A hybrid between a dramatic poem and a pageant, the masque grew out of the carnival and Epiphany revels, and was naturalised at the court of Henry VIII. as a Twelfth Night frolic, with disguising song and dance; classical and mythological decorations, inventions and machinery were subsequently added. The diversion of masquing was generally deputed by Elizabeth and her nobles to the children of the chapel. Jonson was commissioned to organise a number of these spectacular shows for James I.'s extravagant and pleasure-loving Queen, Anne,



aided by such experts as Inigo Jones, Ferrabosco (music), and T. Giles (concerted dances). They cost thousands of pounds, and were acted frequently by the Queen and her ladies—the Masque of Blackness, for instance, in which they appeared as negresses. Jonson's part of them was lavishly done—abounding in splendid diction, fertile in imaginative device, and rich in masculine word play. His only rival in masque-making was Thomas Campion. Ben was also famous for his songs. These are generally somewhat artificial—we can fancy him planning them in accordance with some formula or recipe such as the author of *Annabel Lee* professed:

> **Then Jonson came instructed from the school,**
> **To please in method, and invent by rule.**

But, however produced, his effects are not seldom superb. The Elizabethan music was in his ears, its phrases were on his lips, and these things remained a legacy of English lyrists down to Marvell's time.

Meanwhile Jonson's best plays followed in rapid succession: *The Silent Woman,* 1609; *The Alchemist,* 1610; *Catiline,* 1611; *Bartholomew Fair,* 1614; and *The Devil is an Ass,* 1616. He remained high in court favour with hardly a break. In 1616, when he brought out a folio edition of his *Works,* he was made poet laureate with a pension of 100 marks. In the previous years we note traits of the man in the casual glimpses we get of him. Rejoining the Anglican Church with such energy that he drained the communion cup to the dregs; dominating the circle of wits at the Mermaid in Bread Street, or sharing the nimble talk with Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Drayton; swallowing large potations of Canary; and seeking diversion in the neighbouring purlieus of Bartholomew Fair or the rookeries of Alsatia and Bermuda. For a time we hear he served as tutor to Raleigh's son and went with him

to Paris, where he told the Cardinal du Perron frankly that his translation of Virgil was worthless; but his loose habits of drinking lost him this post, shamefully enough. The Earl of Pembroke, one of his many high-born friends, sent him regularly on New Year's Day £20 to buy books withal; but a fire broke out and seriously damaged his library, whereupon he wrote his *Execration of Vulcan.* In 1618 he set out on his famous walking tour to Scotland, spending nearly a year *en route,* including a sojourn of some weeks with William Drummond at Hawthornden. He offended the quiet scholar half-unwittingly by his brutal outspokenness, his strongly assertive and contemptuous manner. He was, however, honoured in strange lands by being made a burgess of Edinburgh, and he seems to have felt sufficiently at home to fall in love with a lady, to whom he left his picture as a vehicle of consolation. He was also created an M.A. at Oxford with every kind of complimentary observance. His last really notable play appeared in 1625, and with the death of James and accession of Charles his favour began to decline. He had a fierce feud with Inigo Jones, the topics of dissension being those still common among artistes. He came under the shadow of royal displeasure, and in place of masques contrived hasty plays, which Dryden not altogether unjustly calls "dotages." He wrote an appeal to himself at last to "leave the loathèd stage." Touched by compassion for the old poet, Charles sent him a present and afterwards raised his (generally unpaid) salary as laureate. So we get a last glimpse of Ben in some renewal of his old glory, with his tribe of satellite wits around him in the Apollo (or big room) of the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street. We can see him still with his rocky face, hectoring voice, great stoop, and "mountain belly," living (until the last he was bedridden with palsy) the bibulous life of a reveller and a roysterer, as well as a stupendous wit. He died



on the 6th and was buried on the 9th of August, 1637, in Westminster Abbey,[1] where Sir John (Jack) Young, for eighteenpence to a mason, procured him that most famous of English epitaphs, "O rare Ben Jonson."

For all his didactic tone, the moralist is not unduly obtruded in Jonson. His censorship is, indeed, more judicial than strictly moral, and his scorn of fools and shams is quite as great, if not greater, than his hatred for knaves. As a chastiser of vice, he is seen to best advantage in *Volpone* or *The Fox,* first performed at the Globe Theatre in 1605, and published two years later with a dedication to the two equal and sister universities. In this play certainly Jonson lashes vice with terrific power, and metes out to the moral delinquents at the end a stern and exemplary justice by way of punishment.

"Putting aside Shakespeare," says Cumberland, "I would venture an opinion that this drama of *The Fox* is, critically speaking, the nearest to perfection of any one drama, comic or tragic, on the English stage." From this judgment there seems little reason, even at the present day, to dissent. The power and variety of the working of the central theme, the admirable form both of the structure and of the embellishments, combine with the absorbing nature of the fable and the marvellous richness and energy of the dialogue to render the play one of the most fascinating to read, as it has always proved until quite recent times one of the most effective on the stage. The only plays that approach *Volpone* in maintaining the strenuous ethical tone are the tragedy of *Sejanus* and to a lesser extent the comedy *The Devil is an Ass.* Either they represent a series of ingenious trickeries as in *The Alchem-*

[1] When John Hunter's grave was being made in the Abbey, Jonson's skull was discovered with red hair still attaching to it, and the position confirmed the tradition that he had been buried upright (Stanley, *Memorials of the Abbey,* 1882, 255).



ist and *Every Man in his Humour,* without anything that could be called a serious moral, or, as in *Bartholomew Fair,*[1] they illustrate a kind of saturnalia, affording opportunities for a wonderful satiric insight into the "upside down" of society. In *The Silent Woman* we have what is really a pure farce, depending much upon ingenuity of plot, without a trace of moral tone, and all the better for its freedom from it.

The Alchemist (that "incomparable" play, as Mr. Pepys called it), in which we have the very apotheosis of roguery, is chiefly famous for its highly finished construction. Jonson often tended to a complexity by which the central emphasis essential for the serious motive

[1] The plot of *Bartholomew Fair* bears the same relation to that of a complex structure like *The Alchemist* as that of *Pickwick* bears to the plot of a highly organised modern novel. The fable is, in fact, little more than a device for bringing the various characters together in the middle of Bartholomew Fair. Jonson combines throughout this wonderful medley the frankness of ancient with the richness of modern humour, his satire running riot through a laughable saturnalia of knavery, folly, and cant. In the humorous yet keen observation of its outlook upon society it connects unmistakably with the drama of Shadwell and the fiction of Defoe, Smollett, and Dickens. Here, as in *The Silent Woman,* the conception is farcical; and the most serious part of the satire, that which deals with Puritanism, is no more than caricature. In *The Devil is an Ass* and *The Staple of News* (1626), Jonson's wit and wisdom are still in possession. Nevertheless, signs of the decline which set in at the close of James I.'s reign are already visible: in *The Devil is an Ass* we observe an inability to combine the various threads of a complex intrigue, as is done with such marvellous skill in *The Alchemist.* In *The Staple of News* the reader is never certain whether he is to regard the character of Pecunia as a money-bag or as a real live princess; and the same deplorable confusion of allegory and realism runs through the whole structure of this remarkable but very imperfect play.



was sacrificed; but in *The Alchemist* he attains the happy mean. The comedy ends in no very moral fashion. The author inclines his audience, like Lovewit, to take an indulgent view of the transcendent wit, roguish though it is, of the inimitable Face. Face, is, indeed, the hero of the piece, and his adroitness and his marvellous "patter" to his victims surpass even the cleverness of Mosca. In ingenuity of construction *The Alchemist* excels *Volpone,* but in the deeper fertility of imaginative power and poetry it seems to us a good deal inferior. Less grim than *The Alchemist,* and much less grim than *Volpone,* is *The Silent Woman,* which is the most Molièresque and, on the whole, the most laughable of all Jonson's pieces. The collegiate ladies are, in reality, a kind of anticipation of the *précieuses* of Molière. The idea of the character of Morose, a gentleman who loves not noise, and who insists upon being answered by signs, is taken direct from Libanius, the sophist of Antioch. His pre-occupation with the idea of getting a tongue-tied wife, and his ludicrous deception, is quite in the manner of one of the farces of Molière. The *lusis,* or untying of the plot, seems hardly to deserve all the commendation bestowed upon it by Dryden. But the introduction of a counter-butt to Morose in the person of Sir Amorous Lafoole, descended lineally from the French Lafooles, but *not* one of the Lafooles of Essex, is an admirable bit of comic invention.

Jonson conceived comedy as a picture of manners, and he showed, perhaps, an overfondness for local colour and contemporary types. Of this kind there existed no complete example in England before his time. Shakespeare approached it in *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and again in *Twelfth Night;* but both of these appeared after *Every Man in his Humour,* which was in 1598 essentially a new thing in native comedy. Shakespeare's comedy is never quite what Jonson's was, pre-eminently satiric and didactic.



To Jonson the end and aim in comedy was the ridicule of folly and every form of pretension, affectation, and cant; the exhibition of the comic hideousness of lust, avarice, and dishonesty. Intolerant of every kind of folly and humbug, his comedy is the whip wherewith he scourged what he hated and despised. Herein lay both the intensity and the narrowness inherent in his scheme of comic drama. He exhibits follies and vices pitilessly, minutely, aspect after aspect, and bids us not so much laugh as scorn and loathe. Indeed, it is almost too serious for laughter. We can laugh somewhat at Bobadill and Kitely, for in *Every Man in his Humour* there is a certain geniality of manner. But this disappears in the later comedy; the scourging is too terrific, and the exposure too brutal for laughter. Who can laugh at Corvino? Even the roaring humours of *Bartholomew Fair* are grim in the memory. Throughout his comedies Jonson stands apart, an unsympathetic showman, an Asper, contemptuous and wrathful. His ridicule trembles always on the verge of denunciation. We cannot laugh heartily at what we despise, and Jonson himself is not amused, or only grimly. *Volpone* is a tragedy rather than a comedy, and *Bartholomew Fair* a farce that Juvenal might have written.

But, after all, we have no right to demand laughter of Jonson, still less a creative power given to Shakespeare alone among dramatists. It must be remembered that Jonson the satirist, the censor, did not require for his purposes the creation of complex human beings. Where the object is the satire of real types, complete human figures demanding sympathy, and untypical in proportion to their individuality, are out of place. And by comparison with those of any other Elizabethan dramatist than Shakespeare, how rich and vivid to us are Jonson's portraits!

Jonson is by far the most intellectual of Elizabethan



dramatists, save Shakespeare, and by right of his masculine wit and energy he occupies to this day, by acclamation, the Vice-President's chair. Every scene of his great comedies has a concentrated force, a drastic wit, an irony, a sublime common sense, a grip of detail, a vivid intensity, hardly to be paralleled. The conception and construction of *Volpone, The Alchemist,* and *Bartholomew Fair* are alike triumphs of imagination and grasp. In exactness of observation where humanity alone is concerned, Jonson matches Shakespeare, and in constructive power he stands first of all. At his highest points, in *Volpone* and in *Sir Epicure Mammon,* his imagination has created transcendent and unique figures, in which the comic and the horrible meet and are one.

Great writer and great Elizabethan though he is, Jonson remains something of an alien in English letters. From the mind of his great contemporary he stands as much aloof as an Arab stands from a Persian. He makes one capital mistake—that of thinking that English Art would best achieve its aim by assimilating or appropriating what was best in the Greco-Latin literature. He forgot that whenever a foreign work is finely translated an opportunity (probably unique, so rare is the planetary conjunction required for the production of really fine work) is missed of producing an original creative effort of a high order.

The learned George Chapman (1559—1634), *doyen* of Elizabethan dramatists, gave his most noted plays to the world simultaneously with the great dramas of Shakespeare's prime, between 1600 and 1613. He had a considerable share in the comedy *Eastward Ho,* containing those reflections on the Scots which gave him and his collaborator Ben Jonson so much trouble. This was in 1605, and in the same year appeared his best comedy, *All Fools,* which owes, however, its unusual excellence of construction entirely to Terence. But Chapman's best work is in those



tragedies which he founded on incidents in contemporary French history. The Duc de Biron, whose name had already been taken in vain by Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost,* perished on the scaffold in 1602. Chapman's two plays of *The Conspiracy* and *Tragedy of Byron,* forming one continuous drama in ten acts, were written probably as early as 1605, though they were not published until 1608. Two other plays of a similar type, *Bussy d'Ambois* and *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois,* belonging respectively to 1607 and 1613, are replete with midnight conspiracy, mystery, murder, and Machiavellismus. In some of the splendid rhetoric which is inlaid in his speeches, Chapman, perhaps, more easily approaches Shakespeare than any of his fellow dramatists. But as regards dramatic effect, he is seldom reminiscent of Shakespeare even in his least inspired moments, for instance, in *Timon of Athens.* Chapman seems to have no idea whatever of the need for rapidity of action on the stage; he is tediously long-winded, his puppets do not talk, they make speeches. Yet, now and again, amidst verbosity, over-emphasis, and emphatic commonplace, there comes a speech so magnificently inspired that we cannot help regarding Chapman as one of the greatest poets of the Elizabethan drama. Take the following passage for example:

> **Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea**
> **Loves to have his sails filled with a lusty wind**
> **Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,**
> **And his rapt ship run on her side so low**
> **That she drinks water and her keel ploughs air.**

A colleague of both Jonson and Chapman in *Eastward Ho* was John Marston (1576—1634), who was educated at Coventry and Brasenose, Oxford, took orders, and in 1616 became vicar of Christchurch, Hampshire. He resigned his living in 1631 and died on June 25th three years later,



in the parish of Aldermanbury. Personally, Marston seems to have been at feud with most of his fellow dramatists, conspicuously with Ben Jonson, in whose *Poetaster* and *Revels* he appears respectively as the contemptible Crispinus and the pretentious cad Hedon; his satires called *The Scourge of Villainy,* 1598, bespeak a lofty disdain for the whole human race. There is great turgidity and violence about his tragedies, despite their occasional trenchancy of expression. But he is forever straining his style a point too high. There is something suspect about the harshness and bitterness of Marston which becomes monotonous, and assumes the outlines of a pose. His two comedies, *The Malcontent* and *The Dutch Courtezan,* 1604-5, are on the whole decidedly better reading than his tragedies, such as *Antonio and Mellida* (1602) and *Sophonisba* (1606). The extravagance of Marston's tragedic rant was not improbably glanced at in Shakespeare's ancient Pistol. His work remains a glaring example of the extravagance, misuse of genuine power, and lack of taste, which mars so much of the Elizabethan drama.

Of Thomas Dekker we know little, save that he oscillated pretty steadily between Grub Street, the Counter, and King's Bench prisons, and worked diligently for most of his life, both in partnership and alone, as playwright and pamphleteer. Dekker possessed an unrivalled knowledge of the town, and he was, with Heywood, the chief of those popular city dramatists who depended more upon the groundlings and apprentices for applause than upon the mixed West End audience, with a strong sprinkling of nobility, to which Shakespeare more especially addresses himself. This group of dramatists, which Ben Jonson held in special disdain,[1] was reinforced from time to time

[1] Dekker was the Demetrius Fannius, the rank slanderer and mere "play-dresser" in *Poetaster.*



by such men as Rowley, Anthony Munday, Day, Marston, and Middleton. All these writers wrote much in collaboration, and were easily diverted from the drama to produce pageants, panegyrics, and any other form of literature that would pay. Dekker displays in his prose works great talents of observation and descriptive narration; and in his plays, writes Professor Saintsbury, "a most charming dramatic genius, a little, as is the wont of the time, chaotic and irregular, but sweet and pathetic, as is no contemporary save the master of all, especially in the delineation of women's character, while he has both blank verse and lyric touches and flashes, not seldom well sustained, of divinest poetry." This reads like an attempt to see Dekker with the eyes of Lamb, who said that there was poetry enough in Dekker for anything. And there certainly are rich veins of poetry in Dekker, especially of the lyrical order; but, as a whole, his plays have much of the old primitive chaos about them. They take us back to the undeveloped drama of the early 'nineties rather than to the brilliant comedy of *Twelfth Night* and *Every Man in his Humour*. They revert in type to medleys such as *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* or *The Old Wives' Tale*, if they do not, indeed, go still further back half-way to the moralities of John Heywood. Something in the nature of a dramatic parable was deemed specially appropriate to the London apprentices from the earliest times down to *George Barnwell*, and from *George Barnwell* down to the latest Drury Lane melodrama. This parabolic quality is seen very clearly in Dekker's most popular dramas, such as *Old Fortunatus*, given at Christmas, 1599, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* of the same date, and *The Honest Whore*, in two parts, of a few years later.[1] Dekker

[1] *Old Fortunatus*, for instance, derived from an old German source, is a regular fable, illustrating the misuse of riches and the blindness of man when he is *vis-a-vis* with his



seems to write most happily and easily when he is in a hurry, and has not to cast about for his material; his good-humoured realism is then seen at its best, whereas, when he tries to be impressive, he is nearly always conventional. He deserves some credit as one of the very few Elizabethan playwrights who cared to base their drama on the actual life they saw about them.

Another writer who comes into this group as a utility dramatist, following such men as Munday, Chettle, Haughton, and Dekker, from whom he derived several characteristics, was Thomas Middleton, a gentleman of Gray's Inn, who turned scribbler, tried his hand in most kinds of writing for the market, obtained a small post in the city as chronologer in 1620, and died in 1627. His most fertile period of composition was between 1607 and 1611, when he wrote *The Phœnix, Michaelmas Term, The Mayor of Quinborough, A Trick to Catch the Old One, The Family of Love, Your Five Gallants, A Mad World, my Masters,* and *The Roaring Girl,* this last in collaboration with Dekker. All these were designed to hold the mirror up to contemporary fashions and foibles; hence his plays form an invaluable treasure-

destiny. There is a good comic servant in this called Shadow, but hardly any other characterisation to speak of. There is a good deal, however, in the second part of *The Honest Whore*, where we have another morality presented, this time rather as a romance than an extravaganza. In the first part of this play, Bellafront, the heroine, is converted from her evil life by the eloquent pleadings of Hippolito; the second, and much the better, part represents the converted courtesan defending the position she has gained against the assaults of Hippolito himself. It is Hippolito now who has fallen away from his former lofty standard of virtue. Grossly improbable as the plot is, the characters are powerfully realised, and some of the scenes deeply moving owing to the simplicity and directness of the pathos.



house for the antiquary.[1] "Possessing a knowledge of life in London only rivalled by that of Dekker, he knew how to reproduce his own experience in a dramatic form. Bawds, panders, harlots, usurers, pawnbrokers, gulls, gallants, gamblers, doctors, judges, linen-drapers, and apprentices crowd and bustle through the dialogue of his comedies with a vigorous zest which must have been highly palatable to the spectators of the time, and perhaps no English dramatist has inherited so much of the prosaic imitative spirit of the new comedy at Athens."

Middleton often worked in conjunction with a professional actor-dramatist, William Rowley; Rowley influenced him in the direction of a gentler type of character-drawing in addition to writing the first scene and underplot of *A Fair Quarrel,* the first part of *A World Tost at Tennis,* and the first and last scenes as well as the underplot of *The Changeling,* by far Middleton's finest play. *The Changeling,* written about 1622, proves decisively to modern critics that Middleton's real strength lay in tragedy; but he has left only one other powerful essay in this line, the undated tragedy of *Women Beware Women.* The central situation in *The Changeling* is magnificently conceived. De Flores, a deformed scoundrel of deepest dye, has a passion for Beatrice (the heroine), who loathes him. Beatrice has been plighted to Alonzo, a noble gentleman; unhappily her heart had already been bestowed on one Alsèmero. De Flores tempts Beatrice by offering to put Alonzo out of the way. She consents. De Flores, hitherto grovelling in humility, intrudes into her chamber on the day of the wedding between Beatrice and Alsemero, and insists on the satiation of his hellish passion, to the

[1] His able *Game at Chesse,* with dangerous political satire in it, was given in 1624 to crowded audiences; it shows what a fine classical scholar Middleton was—"hardly second to Ben himself."



gratification of which he compels her by threats of divulging all. Here occurs a truly great scene—one of the finest in English drama. Alsemero nevertheless suspects, and De Flores only prevents punishment by himself applying the cold steel—first to Beatrice, then to himself.

Thomas Heywood, gentleman, born in Lincolnshire somewhere about 1574, and educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, was one of the most prolific playwrights of James I.'s reign. He wrote a prose *Apology for the Stage* in 1612, defending the theatre from the attacks of Gosson and his Puritan successors, who denounced play-going. He himself joined the Admiral's men as an actor about 1595, the year which saw Kyd's death and very probably the first production at the Curtain of *Romeo and Juliet*. Heywood soon became better known as a lightning playwright, a kind of Elizabethan Scribe, rather than as a player. He claims to have knocked together in all some 220 plays, written to meet the stage exigencies of the moment, and printed or not as chance directed. Of these only some twenty-two have come down to us. In his homely conception of his vocation, in his uncritical attitude towards his material, in his frequent crudity and carelessness, he takes us back to the old-fashioned harlequin type of dramatic production, adapted to suit the momentary pressure of the theatrical market rather than aimed at fulfilling any theory of dramatic art. His plays are said to have been loosely and rapidly composed in taverns, and this history of their origin accords well enough with the elementary underlining of every situation, and with the general slovenliness of workmanship.

There is a wistful tenderness, a sense of the whimsical contrariety of human nature and of the weathercock variability of human passion, which give his most notable play, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (produced 1603, printed 1607), an almost modern note. This belongs to the cate-



gory of what Diderot and Mercier subsequently called *bourgeois* drama, enabling us to be the spectators of homely domestic scenes of everyday life. The singular merit of the play lies in the quiet beauty of the idea of the ending and in the truth and pathos of the character of Frankford. It is clumsily and carelessly constructed, and the essential figure of the wife is drawn with a faint and vacillating outline. She sins and repents and dies alike without justification. When Heywood came to write his next best play, *The English Traveller,* published in 1633, he was more under the influence of Ben Jonson than, as heretofore, of Shakespeare. The best scenes deal with the unselfish love of an old gentleman of the Frankford family, recently wedded to a young wife, for a very good young man called Geraldine. Grief is brought upon all the characters owing to the somewhat Quixotic behaviour of this young man and the intrigues of a friend whom he introduces into his patron's house. But there are not many men in the whole world so unsuspecting as Frankford and old Wincott. The play has some of the quiet pathos of its predecessor, but an undue strain is put upon our credulity, and matters are made worse by a by-plot of the most whimsical nature derived in the main from the *Mostellaria* of Plautus. It contains a notable bravura passage, however, describing the drunken hallucinations of a band of roysterers over their cups. The most notable of Heywood's remaining comedies of domestic life are *The Lancashire Witches, The Wise Woman of Hogsdon, Fortune by Land and Sea, The Fair Maid of the Exchange,* and *The Fair Maid of the West;* while among his old-fashioned "histories" are *Edward IV.* and *If you Know not me you Know Nobody.* Some of his best poetry is inwoven in the four *Ages,* of which Heywood was very proud. He died about 1650.

John Webster, who, putting aside Shakespeare and Marlowe, probably ranks first among the tragic drama-



tists of our great dramatic epoch, was born in London, probably about 1580. In 1602 he began writing plays in partnership for the company of which Henslowe was the presiding spirit. In 1604 he was employed by the King's company to make additions to Marston's *Malcontent,* and a little later he was associated with Dekker in the plays of *Westward Ho!* and *Northward Ho!* in which the influence of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* has been traced. But Webster's title to fame rests almost exclusively upon the two great tragedies of revenge, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi,* both of which were almost certainly written, mainly under influence of Kyd, Shakespeare, and Marston, within five years of Shakespeare's death. In the whole of Elizabethan drama there are no plays outside Shakespeare which show such rare and intense imaginative power as these two. Their charnel-house atmosphere, their sinister suggestiveness, the gloom of their imaginative cynicism, and their appalling scent of churchyard mould, put them in a place apart. Webster was, no doubt, profoundly influenced by Shakespeare—by Shakespeare especially as the delineator of the cruelty of passion, the Shakespeare of *Othello, Measure for Measure,* and *Antony and Cleopatra;* while in his romantic idealism, and his appeal to sheer horror, he connects rather with Marlowe and Kyd and Chettle than with his immediate contemporaries; though he shares the fondness of Beaumont and Fletcher for more or less illicit themes. *The White Devil, or The Tragedy of the Life and Death of Vittoria Corombona,* the famous Venetian courtesan, was first published as acted by the Queen's servants in 1612. The early scenes of this play introduce us at once to some of Webster's most distinctive characteristics. His close imitation of Shakespeare is seen in the manner in which he blends prose and verse, and uses rhymed couplets at every pause in the action; unlike Shakespeare, however, he does not understand how to motive these devices. The atmosphere



of impending fate which Webster loves is achieved instantaneously in Act I., where Flamineo is introduced as pander procuring intimacy between his sister Vittoria, who is married to Camillo, and Brachiano, who is married to Isabella de' Medici. Flamineo is a Protestant Englishman's conception of a countryman of Borgia, and his reproaches to his mother when she interferes with his schemes are not merely revolting in their cynicism, but perfectly horrible.

Webster never attenuates the horrors and seldom graduates the intensity of his effects. The drama progresses by the crude method of dumb show, in which Vittoria's husband and Brachiano's wife are both seen to meet their deaths in a childishly impossible manner. A trial scene, equally impressive and unreal, concludes with Vittoria's condemnation to a house of convertites or fallen women, from which she is successfully rescued by her paramour, Brachiano, preparatory to a general butchery of all the leading characters, making no empty form of Giovanni's concluding behest, "Remove the bodies." If we judge the play by the ordinary external tests, we can hardly fail to come to the conclusion that in the endowments which go to make up a great dramatist, Webster is wholly lacking. The construction of *The White Devil* is either chaotic or, with its dumb shows and apparitions, merely childish. The power of characterisation shown is diminutive—sense of the actual curiously distorted, humour totally absent. There is romantic feeling and some intense poetry, but no breadth in the presentation; everywhere an over-elaboration of detail and a consistent disregard of *ensemble*. Webster's second play, *The Duchess of Malfi*, was first printed in 1623, though it was probably acted by the Queen's servants six years earlier, and may have been written about 1613. Though flawed by grotesque incident and a complexity of horror similar to that of



The White Devil, this play is far more capable of holding the imagination consecutively than its predecessor. The story on which the play is based had been told respectively in Italian, French, and English by Bandello, Belleforest, and Painter. And the tale is referred to as that of "the lady of the Strachey" in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night,* while it was also used by Lope de Vega in *El Majordomo de la Duquesa de Amalfi.*[1] Webster admits no cheerful or lively variation into his lugubrious tragedy,

[1] Bandelo relates how a widowed princess of Amalfi who retains her beauty, and with it a fear lest by re-marriage she should become once more a cipher in her own court, decides to marry a subject, and selects for the purpose her own intendant or steward, Antonio de Bologna, Antonio being not only handsome, but also affectionate and discreet. The wedded pair live happily for some years, in the course of which a son is born to the Duchess, without exciting suspicion or causing the circumstance of their union to be known outside a very small circle. At the birth of their second child the Duchess is less prudent, and her brother, the Cardinal of Arragon, hears reports which cause him to place a number of spies in her household. Antonio seeks safety in a temporary retirement at Ancona. There, however, he is joined by the Duchess, who is resolved to brave out the matter with her kinsfolk. Such an insult to the family pride is deeply resented by her brothers. They bring influence to effect the expulsion of the Duchess and her household from Ancona, and set horsemen to follow the fugitives. Perceiving that they are being tracked, the Duchess entreats Antonio to leave her on his swift horse, hoping thus to avert the worst consequences of her brother's rage. But such hopes are ill-founded; the pursuers, having captured her, cruelly murder both the Duchess and her infants in a solitary castle by the wayside. Antonio falls a victim to their *bravi* in Milan a few days later. This is one of the sombre traditions with which Boccaccio and Bandello are wont to diversify their coarser but more enlivening fables. It just suited to the genius and temper of Webster. Ten of the personages are butchered in their play, eight in *The White Devil.*

which is everywhere encrusted with sombre imagery, and made hideous by the paraphernalia of torture. His object seems to be to distil from it the maximum of tragic horror of which it is susceptible. Webster's imaginative writing is magnificent in certain scenes, but he is strangely dependent and imitative. He imitates Shakespeare, Bacon, Montaigne, and himself, and in *The Duchess* he ransacks Sidney's *Arcadia* for figurative passages and metaphorical expressions, incorporating whole passages of Sidney's prose, just as Shakespeare does with North's *Plutarch* in *Coriolanus*.

Cyril Tourneur (1575—1626)[1] was another student of the drama of his time who threw in his lot with the cultivators of the *frisson*, a large tribe of Elizabethans and Jacobeans, from Kyd, Marlowe, and the author of *Arden of Feversham*, down to Middleton, Webster, and Ford, reinforced occasionally by Fletcher, Marston, and even the staid Massinger. A noble brood! says Hazlitt; but we cannot agree with him that Shakespeare was of it—at least after his early work on a small portion of *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare, it is true, was tempted to use the material of the terror-mongers—in *Hamlet*, for instance; but with what a magician's wand did he alone transform it!

[1] The first attempt at a connected account of Tourneur's very obscure life was made by the present writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He was probably the son of Richard Turnor, a lieutenant at the Brill in Holland—one of Vere's soldiers. Cyril wrote a panegyrical elegy upon Sir Francis Vere in 1609. A connection with the Cecil family procured him a post in the Low Countries, similar to that held by the poet Joshua Sylvester. Sir Edward Cecil's arrival in Holland seemed of good augury to the dramatist, and he secured a post as secretary to that general in the Cadiz expedition. Unfortunately it proved a complete failure, and Tourneur died on the way home at Kinsale, in Ireland, February 28th, 1626.



Cyril Tourneur is only really memorable on account of two plays. The first to be published (1607) was *The Revenger's Tragœdie, As it hath been sundry times acted by the King's Majesties Servants.* Four years later was published *The Atheist's Tragedie; or, the Honest Man's Revenge, As in divers places it hath often beene acted, Written by Cyril Tourneur.* The order of publication was probably the inverse of that in which the plays were composed. The *Atheist's Tragedie* must have been written after 1600, as there is a reference to Dekker's *Fortune's Tennis* of that date, but not much later than 1603-4, while the siege of Ostend was still in men's minds. A third drama by Tourneur, *The Nobleman,* licenced to Edward Blount on February 15, 1612, and acted at the court by the King's men on February 23rd, 1611-1612, is said to have been destroyed by Warburton's cook.

The plays of Tourneur suggest a deliberate attempt made by the dramatist to satisfy the lust of his countrymen for Italian horrors. Details of villainy, monstrous vice, and poisoning were heaped up for this purpose: thus in *The Revenger's Tragedy,* for instance, the story of the poisoning of Louisa Strozzi for resisting Duke Alexander's lust is woven into that of the duke's murder by his pretended pander, Lorenzino. The crime of a country which was believed, like Italy, to represent the brain of Europe and to possess an æsthetic monopoly of the world fascinated the coarser-fibred Englishman of the time. Men like Tourneur could lay themselves out to satisfy this morbid curiosity, which the theatrical managers of the day fostered by every means in their power. The tragedy of blood thus acquired a strong vogue and had a large number of ardent votaries. A needy artist in the first place, Tourneur in the course of his attempts to supply lurid intensity would seem to have lost his own equilibrium. A genuine feeling of the desolation of evil



oppressed him, and with the true Elizabethan gift of converting emotion into expression, he utters cries not wholly grotesque nor insincere, but dark and lamentable as the moaning of despair; his landscape is volcanic, unrelieved by a single clear spot on the horizon. What surprises one in this close and stinking atmosphere is the suppleness and beauty of Tourneur's verse. It must have been a depraved curiosity which has consigned the imagination of a poet to such a crypt of sin and evil as this! Yet there is no mistaking here and there that the strain emerging is that of a true poet. In Tourneur and Ford we must be content to recognise the eccentricity of a great imaginative movement.

John Ford, the younger son of a Devonshire gentleman of independent means, was baptised at Ilsington, near Ashburton, on April 17th, 1586, the year of Sidney's death. He was thus almost of an age with Massinger, though his dramatic career presents few points of resemblance to that of the hard-working and practical playwright. He seems to have been a short time at Oxford, and was certainly admitted to the Middle Temple in 1602. He wrote verses, prose tracts, and a masque called *Honour Triumphant* (1606), and years elapsed before he began to apprentice himself to the stage by putting a hand to some of the loose constructions of Dekker and Rowley; a small fee would doubtless have put the experience of those redoubtable stage carpenters at the disposal of any educated amateur who aspired to theatrical renown. It was not until 1628, when he was well over forty, that Ford felt himself in a position to furnish a piece for the theatre in his own name; *The Lover's Melancholy,* as the play was called, was printed in 1629. It is a thoroughly imitative piece, full of reminiscences of Shakespeare and Fletcher, with a masque suggested by Burton's *Anatomy,* and some buffooneries which sink below the exiguous

standard exacted from Rowley. But it served its purpose admirably in showing Ford the groove in which his narrow genius could most advantageously work—that, namely, of inexorable tragedy. The great themes of tragedy had already been exhausted. The *naïveté,* the directness of passion, the interpolation of the burlesque, the bewildering alternation of motive—all had been tried and exhausted. Webster had decked the stage with cypress and grave clothes, and had elicited sympathy for a harlot almost as fascinating as wicked. With the deliberate intention of making his audience's flesh creep, Ford, unshackled by Webster's sense of moral retribution, determined with all the *sang-froid* of the amateur artist to go farther afield—much farther. In *'Tis Pity she's a Whore,* first published in 1633, Ford treats of the guilty love of Giovanni for his sister Annabella.

The moralist who regards this terrible play will hardly be conciliated by the unmistakable power which it exhibits. But it is marked throughout by an economy of rhetoric, and by a concentrated intensity in the dialogue which is extremely rare outside Shakespeare. The guilty figures of brother and sister stand out in bold relief with indubitable grandeur of outline, and the poet invests them, in spite of their depravation, with a kind of heroism which places them far above the comparatively sordid figure of the husband. Ford had evidently noted the sympathy which Webster had evoked for a character so thoroughly corrupt as that of Vittoria Corombona, and he represents here the same superficial innocence of tone which gives a semblance of beauty and of the ideal to evil, the most ugly and repulsive. The poison of this poetic treatment of mortal sin is thus dissolved in a cup of almost seductive sweetness. None of the poetic force with which this play is so directly charged is frittered away upon irrelevant decoration. The emotion in it is absorbing. It may be



purchased at too high a price; but it is centred and unified with almost the same intentness that is to be found in *Othello.* To pull the bow as tight again and to do so in a legitimate manner proved beyond Ford's capacity. The best attempt he made was that in his next play, *The Broken Heart,* printed in 1633. In this an ingenious plot is directed with single aim upon a situation in the fifth act in which the heroine is subjected to an intensity of suffering, the accumulation of which upon the seemingly stoical heroine has the effect of killing her outright. The play is well constructed and finely moulded in all its externals, but the characters are lifeless. They have no existence apart from the immediate circumstances in which we find them. And the scattered beauties, not excluding those of the famous scene in which Calantha hears successively of the deaths of her father, her friend, and her brother, will not compensate for the sheer extravagance of this *dénouement.* It is extraordinary to find a critic of Lamb's nice humour and discernment working himself up into a fervour over this scene, which ends thus: "The expression of this transcendent scene almost bears me in imagination to Calvary and the Cross"!

Ford wrote several other single-handed plays. Of these *Love's Sacrifice* is a coarse tissue of passion and revenge not wholly dissimilar to the plays which had preceded it. *The Lady's Trial,* acted in 1638, shows that Ford had not altogether abandoned the idea of developing a vein of pleasantry, conspicuously absent though this had been from his previous attempts. His by-plots generally are the reverse of entertaining. The chronicle history of Perkin Warbeck is Ford's one attempt in the direction of historical drama. Ford had the best material of any dramatic chronicler of the age—Bacon's admirable Life of Henry VII. But Ford's sense of humour and power of developing character were wholly inadequate to the competent



treatment of such a theme. Ford's versification is a good deal more Shakespearean than that of most of his contemporaries. It is fluent without a deficiency of depth, while it sacrifices no shade of meaning to the requirements of metrical composition. The lyrics in *The Broken Heart* display a melodious fancy. As a general rule Ford is far less prone to experiments in his verse, metrical or immetrical, than either Webster or Fletcher, and his verse, owing to its masculine character, approximates more nearly to the versification of Cyril Tourneur.

Philip Massinger, the son of a gentleman in the service of the Earl of Pembroke, was born at Salisbury in 1583, studied at Oxford (St. Alban Hall) between 1602 and 1606, when he made his way to London, though he is not known to have commenced playwrighting until nearly ten years later. He probably worked his way up like Shakespeare, though with much greater deliberation; it is known that he began as a play mender and renovator. Few writers surpassed him in practical experience of stage requirements. He wrote a very large number of plays in collaboration. He flattered Shakespeare by frequent imitation, and was Fletcher's principal assistant. A good many of his own pieces have been destroyed, but fifteen at least of the plays which he wrote unaided have come down to us. He lived on almost to the closure of the drama by the Puritans; was found dead in his bed in his Bankside lodgings one March morning of 1640; and was buried in the neighbouring church of St. Saviour, near the author of *The Faithful Shepherdess*.

Massinger's plays, as a whole, are marked by an even skill in workmanship. He is clever at composition, prolific of rhetorical blank verse suited to almost every requirement, and a consummate master of all the professional technique of the stage. He excels in the somewhat mechanical character-designing of the Caroline



period. He is a master of stage verse and histrionic eloquence. For satire, especially for political satire, he has an exceptional knack; but he strangely lacks that overmastering passion, that brief moment of inspiration which seems to have been a birthmark with almost all his contemporaries among writers for the stage. His verses somewhat miss the catch of the Elizabethan manner. He was a stranger to that alacrity with which even a dramatic underling of that period seemed to tumble to a tunable lay. He is never to be seen reeling under the impulse of the vehement emotion which breathes in the spontaneous, if too lawless, vigour of the older race. The facility of mere convention had replaced the vital energy which characterised the immediate successors of Shakespeare.

The plays that Massinger wrote unaided appear to have been written during the eighteen years between 1618 and 1636. The first of these is *The Duke of Milan,* a sombre tragedy based upon a story, which is partly historical but more imaginary, on the fall of Ludovico Sforza. In this play, as in *The Emperor of the East,* written twelve years later, the hero, who is a man of passionate and ungovernable temper, unjustly suspects his wife of infidelity. No dramatist of the time repeats himself more than Massinger is in the habit of doing. He also repeats others—so many *genres* of play had been utterly used up. The most practical of all contemporary playwrights, he developed strict habits of literary economy, economy not only of passion, but also in forms of rhetoric, in which his plays ordinarily abound—none more so than his early tragedies, *The Duke of Milan, The Unnatural Combat, The Renegade,* and *The Roman Actor.* Some of the scenes in this last are finely conceived. Domitian, the emperor, plays a part in stage tragedy and kills outright his rival in love, the actor Paris, who had previously defended the dignity of his art with success against an impeachment by the Senate. Of



semi-political plays, Massinger perpetrated several, the most remarkable being the two tragi-comedies, *The Bondman,* acted in 1623, and *The Maid of Honour,* played at the Phœnix, in Drury Lane, somewhere about 1630. In *The Maid of Honour,* Fulgentio, the minion of Robert, King of Sicily, is certainly meant for Buckingham.

Discouraged though Massinger often seems and deficient in nervous edge, his observation and satirical energy are sufficiently attested by such a comedy as *The City Madam* of 1632; but his greatest achievement undoubtedly is the racy Jonsonian comedy, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts,* probably written in the winter season of 1625-6, though not printed until 1632. The play contains two character types, Sir Giles Overreach, who is almost worthy to rank with Volpone, and Justice Greedy, a farcical figure hardly, if at all, inferior to Morose. Both are superb stage creations, and were the delight of leading actors down to the collapse of the licenced houses in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The intrigue and construction are alike of a thoroughly histrionic character. The plot might have been taken direct from the comedy of *Terence,* and it certainly owes something nearer at hand to *A Trick to Catch the Old One.* The satire concentrated into the delineation of Overreach and Greedy is unmistakably after the pattern of Ben Jonson, even if it lacks Jonson's severe originality of treatment. The vitality of the play is due, of course, to the one stage figure of Sir Giles Overreach. As with Tamburlaine, Barabas, Shylock, Sir Epicure Mammon, the theme is the energy and will-power of a single man under the dominion of superhuman lust. Massinger has none of the power of dealing with an abstraction or creature of *virtú* in a poetic manner as Marlowe or Shakespeare had. But he atones to some extent for the deficiency by his superabundance of stage sense and his knowledge of what is due to the part of Overreach as



lead of the first magnitude. Few parts, undoubtedly, have had such a great stage career as that of Sir Giles Overreach.

The last of the giants of the English theatre before the deluge of Puritanism, not a giant in individual stature, but a direct continuator of the tradition of Shakespeare, was James Shirley. Born in the City of London on September 13th, 1596, Shirley was admitted to Merchant Taylors' School in October, 1608, and passed thence direct to St. John's College, Oxford, four years later. Laud, who was then president of the college, was interested in Shirley's literary precocity, but is said to have objected to a man with a large mole on his face taking holy orders. Shirley migrated to Catharine Hall, Cambridge, and there wrote his graceful poem, *Narcissus,* in undisguised imitation of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis.* About 1622 he abandoned the English Church for that of Rome, and followed teaching as a profession at St. Albans Grammar School. At St. Albans about 1625 he wrote his first successful comedy called *Love Tricks.* His success in his new vocation might have led to a place in the royal household, so high in favour was gentlemanly comedy held at court. But Shirley was a studious, literary type of man who seems to have preferred the study to the perils of court favour. Yet Shirley's facile and modest temper won him the favour of several persons of rank, and of not a few of the contemporary wits and dramatists, such as Ford, Massinger, Habington, Randolph, and May. The successful production of his plays was broken only by visits to Ireland in 1636 and 1638. Three or four of his plays were produced in Dublin, and during the decline of the king's fortunes he seems to have been settled obscurely in London. Under the influence of the great blight which befell all dramatic ambitions Shirley fell back upon teaching a small school, while, according to Wood, he spent

much acknowledged labour as a drudge for the remorseless translator, John Ogilby. After Shirley had seen much of the world in various conditions, he and his second wife Frances were driven by the dismal conflagration that happened in London in 1666 from their habitation near to Fleet Street into the parish of St. Giles's-in-the-Field, where, overcome by the fright and the losses they had sustained, they both died, and were buried in one grave at St. Giles's on October 29th, 1666. One of his sons became butler at Furnival's Inn. Over twenty comedies and half as many tragedies or tragi-comedies by Shirley are still extant. Among the comedies *The Wedding,* first given in 1626; *The Brothers,* performed in the same year; *Hyde Park,* acted 1632; *The Gamester,* 1634; and *The Lady of Pleasure,* 1635, are among the most diverting. The plot of *The Gamester* is said to have been partly suggested by and the development highly approved by his Majesty Charles I. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is said to have owed its inception to a royal suggestion taking the ordinary form of a command. But *The Gamester* probably stands alone in its reliance upon a fable that emanated directly from the reigning sovereign, though, like other fabulists of the period, Charles I. seems to have been indebted to the Italian *novellieri,* probably in this case to the *novelle* of Celio Malespini. Of the tragedies, *The Traitor,* first acted in 1631, and *Love's Cruelty* of the same year, would probably be preferred by most readers to Shirley's own favourite, *The Cardinal,* which was apparently written in direct emulation of Webster's *Duchess of Malfi.* Shirley was a skilful constructor, and most of his plots were of his own invention. But he stands in much the same position to the two generations of dramatists that preceded him as the Caracci stood to the great floreal period of Italian art, and it was almost inevitable that his talent should feed on the imaginations of Shakespeare and



Jonson, Fletcher, Massinger, and Webster. He reproduces their style, their diction, and even their tone, in much the same way as Sir Walter Besant in his happier moments reflects something of the manner of Dickens or Thackeray. A natural taste and "elegant smoothness" of style came to the aid of his adroitness, and he worked buoyantly upon the old lines. He was excellent at soliloquies and descriptions, and had a genuine sense of the picturesque.

It seems rather doubtful whether Shirley should take a place upon his own merits in the *chorus vatum* of those days when poet and playwright were one. But he cannot well be divorced from that fellowship, not so much, as Lamb says, on account of any transcendent genius in himself, but because he was the last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common. The gradual exhaustion of the great talents paved the way naturally for a continuation of mediocre endowments such as that represented by Shirley. His work has plenty of vivacity, and is clothed in delicate shades of grey and of green, but it lacks the azure and the purple of which the great masters could in fit season be so lavish. It is interesting to reflect that he might, conceivably, have been present at the first performance of one of Shakespeare's latest and of Dryden's earliest productions. From Marlowe to Shirley, in the short space of fifty years, a complete literary movement has been traversed. The greatest impulse that literary art has ever known has risen, culminated, declined, and finally worn itself out. Says Maeterlinck, "I should never finish if I had to cite the names of all these dramatists, for never has humanity blossomed so spontaneously and so abundantly in inexhaustible poetry, in beauty so multiform, and so profound. One might fancy oneself in the midst of a miraculous springtide of the human mind. Truly were those the days of marvellous promise. One would have



said that humanity was going to develop into something altogether new." [1]

[1] The editions of Beaumont and Fletcher are by Weber (1812), Alexander Dyce (11 vols., 1843-6), and the "Variorum editions," now in progress, one under the direction of A. H. Bullen, the other issuing from the Pitt Press. Ten principal plays were given in the Mermaid Series (2 vols., ed. Strachey). The studies by Hazlitt and Lowell, and Ashley H. Thorndike's *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare* (1901), are also to be consulted.—The standard edition of Ben Jonson is that by William Gifford (9 vols., 1816), reissued with additions by Cunningham in 1875. The best plays appeared in 3 vols. of the Mermaid Series, 1893-5. The exploration of Jonson still remains very incomplete. There are suggestive introductory studies by Swinburne (cf. *Fortnightly*, 1888), Herford (Mermaid edition), Symonds (Canterbury Poets), Dowden, Schelling (*Timber*), and others; a very useful introduction to *Every Man in his Humour*, by H. B. Wheatley; and there are copiously annotated American editions of *The Alchemist* (Hathaway), *Bartholomew Fair* (Alden), *The Staple of News* (De Winter), and *Poetaster* (Mallory), among the "Yale Studies" of 1903-5. Add to these a brilliant causerie by T. E. Brown (*New Review*, xiv.) A competent edition is expected of Professor Herford.—Of Marston there are editions by Halliwell-Phillipps (1856) and A. H. Bullen (3 vols., 1887).—The standard edition of Middleton is also that of A. H. Bullen (8 vols., 1885-6); and see the essays of Swinburne, Ellis, Wiggin on the Middleton-Rowley plays, and Hugo Jung (1904).—Heywood's plays were edited by J. Pearson (6 vols. 1874), and in the Mermaid Series by Verity, 1888.—Webster's plays have been edited by Dyce (1830 and 1857), and re-edited by Hazlitt. His two best plays were edited with those of Tourneur for the Mermaid Series by J. A. Symonds. See also Elmer E. Stoll, *John Webster: The Periods of his Work* (1905), and an interesting criticism of *The White Devil* by W. W. Greg (*Mod. Lang. Quarterly*, December, 1900), who takes an extremely high view of the consummate art of the construction. For Webster's filchings from Sidney see Charles Crawford in *Notes and Queries*, October, 1904.—There are editions of Massinger by Coxeter, Gifford, Hartley Coleridge (Massinger and Ford, 1840), Cunningham, and a selection in the Mermaid Series (2 vols., ed. Symons, 1904); and for Mas-



singer the student is referred to Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, Symons's *Studies in Two Literatures*, and *Westminster Review*, 1899.—James Shirley (*Dramatic Works*, 6 vols., 1833, and six plays, Mermaid Series, ed. Gosse) is supplemented by Dr. Nissen's *James Shirley* (Hamburg, 1901).—Ford, Heywood, Dekker, and Cyril Tourneur are sufficiently represented in the Mermaid Series. For the later dramatists generally, in addition to the notes by Lamb, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, the student must refer first and foremost to the highly eulogistic studies by Swinburne in his collected essays, and then to the works of Ward, Lowell, Mezières, Jusserand, and Bodenstedt (*Shakespeare's Zeit-Genossen*, Berlin, 1858).



CHAPTER X

ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN PROSE—I

"O all-seeing Light, and eternal Life of all things, to whom nothing is either so great that it may resist or so small that it is contemned, look upon my miserie with thine eye of mercie, and let thine infinite power vouchsafe to limite out some proportion of deliverance unto me, as to thee shall seem most convenient. Let not injurie, O Lord, triumphe over me, and let my faults by thy hands be corrected, and make not mine unjuste enemie the minister of thy Justice. But yet, my God, if in thy wisdome, this be the aptest chastisement for my inexcusable follie; if this low bondage be fittest for my over-hie desires; if the pride of my not-inough humble harte, be thus to be broken, O Lord, I yeeld unto thy will, and joyfully embrace what sorrow thou wilt have me suffer."—The famous prayer used by Charles I. in *Arcadia*, Book III.

John Lyly—Sidney's *Arcadia*—Greene—Dekker—Nash—Nicholas Breton—Hall—Overbury—Earle—James I.—Bacon.

THE first author who risked an original novel in English on his own account had a phenomenal success. This was a young man of some twenty-five summers, a grandson of the once terrible William Lilly, pedagogue and grammarian. John Lyly, as he usually called himself, was a Kentish man and was fresh from Magdalen, Oxford, when in December, 1578, he hatched the memorable novel *Euphues: The Anatomie of Wit.* The resounding character of the success achieved could hardly have been foreseen by any one—even by John Lyly himself. For nearly fifteen years thenceforth he became *arbiter elegantiarium* in all matters pertaining to literature in the court of the Great Queen. Recognised as the high priest of a political and witty fashion, he not only encroached upon the atten-



tion paid by fashionable dames to the sit of a ruff or the health of a pet dog, and imposed his very phrases and sentiments upon their obedient lips, but he was even paid the sincerer homage of imitation by the greatest wits of the age, including not only Greene and Lodge, but William Shakespeare himself. The supplementary volume known as *Euphues and his England* appeared in 1580. Like More's Hythlodaye, Euphues is a moral philosopher who holds forth omnisciently on religion, travel, government, marriage, ethics, and every subject under the sun. Unlike Hythlodaye, he is an ineffable bore.

Lyly's highly artificial style of ornamentation has proved extremely interesting to literary archæologists. In it are to be found, as in a meeting-place, many affectations of contemporary stylists on the continent, many hints from Lyly's contemporary, the rhetor, Arthur Wilson, and not a few supposed peculiarities of Lyly's imitators and successors. What attracted Lyly's readers in the 'eighties of the sixteenth century, however, was not merely his extravagantly elaborate style, but also his high didactic manner and his judicious flattery of Englishmen and more particularly Englishwomen. Great as was his influence among the ladies of the court (who, we are told, were all Lyly's scholars), it was short-lived, and the novelist fluttered about the court a soured and discontented man until, upon his death in November, 1606, hardly any one knew anything either of the writer or his book. Neglect was its fate for over two centuries. Yet its importance in the history of English letters is something considerable, for in it first we leave epic and mediæval tales of chivalry, and approach the novel of manners. There is no longer question of Arthur and his marvellous knights, of Roland or Palmerin, of Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hamtoun, Huon of Bordeaux, or Amadis of Gaul, but rather of contemporary men, who in spite of excessive oratorical finery



possess some resemblance to reality. There is some attempt, at any rate, to depict contemporary manners, and conversations are reported in which the tone of well-born persons of the period may often be detected.

Of the heirs and imitators of Lyly, the well-to-do Thomas Lodge (*Rosalynde,* 1590), the disreputable Robert Greene (*Pandosto,* 1588; *Menaphon,* 1589), the unscrupulous Anthony Munday (*Zelauto,* 1580), the edifying Brian Melbancke (*Philotimus*), Warner, Dickenson, Breton, Rich, Emmanuel Ford and the rest, the fact that they are the costly and exclusive delight of the antiquary and the bibliophile may be allowed to speak for itself. They were evidently written with facility during the flood-tide of an early fiction market, and so much easy writing makes uncommonly hard reading. The story in all these "novels," as we must call them, meanders now between banks of dialogue and now at its own sweet will, now through a marsh of mythology and moral instruction, and again through a mead of miscellaneous verse. But for all the flowers in the meadows and the pleasant conceits in its course, the Elizabethan novel must be pronounced to be wholly unreadable by the reader of to-day. A few of these stories claim to have been written for the delectation of the gentlemen no less than "the ladies of the court"; but in a modern view they will appear almost without exception to have been written for the benefit of very patient children.[1]

The popularity of *Euphues* and of the books which it inspired was waning when Sidney's still more famous *Arcadia* was first published in quarto by Ponsonbie as *The*

[1] The only writer who has made anything out of them is M. Jusserand, who in his *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* and in vol. ii. of his *Histoire Littéraire du Peuple Anglaise,* has discovered a delightful method of poking sympathetic fun at their ingenuous imbecility.



Countess of Pembrokes Arcadia in 1590.[1] It was the fashion of Pope superseding that of Dryden, or the taste for Byron eclipsing that for Scott. Yet Sir Philip Sidney when he wrote it in 1580, or thereabouts, did not write for the court or the public at all, but only for the delectation of his sister, the celebrated Countess of Pembroke, and her coterie at "delicious Penshurst." Her name would be a sanctuary for such a trifle of gossamer, as the author called his romance of "cloud-cuckoo land." To please her he made Love the pivot of his phantasy, and sent her the successive sheets as fast as ever he penned them. The explanation that the *Arcadia,* with its marvellous adventures, its rainbow descriptions, its pastoral nobles and countrymen, its stately kings and queens, was an ardent and immature production, in which the young author was enabled to deliver his fermenting brain of a crowd of theories and love fancies (in verse and prose), fits the work much better than the theory of his friend and encomiast, Fulke Greville, that it was written with high moral and political purpose. The moral and political influence of a half-pastoral, high-chivalric fairy tale is not usually very great.

The popularity of the romance was owing in no small measure to its being a manual of modish affectation in speech, and of gentleman-like accomplishments, of chivalric courtesy and refined ingenuity. Like its subsequent French counterpart, the *Astræa* of D'Urfé, it was a perfect rendezvous of classic and romantic conceits.

The literary distinction of the *Arcadia* is largely due to

[1] A second edition in folio supplemented and newly arranged by Sidney's sister appeared in 1593. There is a good reprint by Prof. Sommer, 1891. For the biography of Sidney consult Lives by Zouch (1808), J. A. Symonds (1886), and Fox Bourne (1892), and compare Sidney Lee's *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century* (1904) and Edith J. Morley's study of Works of Sir Philip Sidney (1901).



the fact that it combines two affectations, two strained ideals—the pastoral and the chivalric (Scenery and Love). The poetical landscape, such as the famed description of Arcadia, is derived from the pastoral of Sannazaro (*Arcadia*, 1504). The love plot is imitated from the famous *Diana Enamorada*, 1542, of the Portuguese Jorge de Montemayor. The second element, on the whole, predominates, and the romantic adventures of the love-lorn Pyrocles and Musidorus are of just such a nature as Don Quixote would have doted on. Many Arcadian affectations, such as the artificiality of the cadence and the exquisite, monotonous obsequiousness of courtesy, are preeminently Spanish. It is in the main a thorough "coterie" piece, written by a very young and very serious literary amateur and doctrinaire. The story is extraordinarily intricate and rambling, and is encumbered by episodes gravely ludicrous and extravagant. Sidney deliberately eschews Euphuism, but he substitutes for it a style hardly less artificial than that of Lyly. Alliteration, paronomasia, repetition, and personification are all found in excess. Yet the very excess of poetic licence (for Sidney's prose is nothing if not poetic), more especially in regard to redundant ornament, is the cause and fountain of many surpassing excellences. Such are many delicate touches of imagination, and not a few phrases and passages of a noble, enchanting, and at times almost lyrical beauty.[1]

[1] That Sidney could also upon occasion excel in perfectly direct and simple speech is nowhere better shown than in the famous prayer of Pamela (Book III., chap. vi.), which Charles I. is said to have used upon the scaffold. The sentences have more than a ring of the Prayer Book; and it is impossible to acquiesce in Milton's condemnation of the dying King because he used so noble a supplication, even though it was "stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god, and that in no serious book." Few books were copied more than the *Arcadia*. Some dramatists, such as Web-



A congener of Greene whom one imagines writing in a cellar against time, fluent, haphazard, reckless, jovial, dissipated, and unabashed by Fortune was Thomas Nash, author of a kind of historical *Gil Blas,* imitated in part from the Spanish rogue-stories (*Lazarillo* and *Guzman*), with an admixture of autobiography in the manner of Greene, and called *Jack Wilton* (1594). Greene, Dekker, and Nash were three curious types who anticipated Murger's *Vie de Bohème* in a metropolis hardly sufficiently developed to welcome such precocious children. Their lot collectively was dramatic job-work, pamphlets, poems, novels, the bottle, loose women, Henslowe (the well-known impresario who commissioned plays from the jobbers), the Clink, literary squabbles, and premature decline and death. Nash was perhaps the gayest and most good-humoured; Greene the most fluent and the biggest liar; Dekker the most perceptive and the most poetic—he rivalled Breton in the delicacy with which he could tune a stave or vamp a lament in a minor key. But Nash also could lilt a pretty song, and, gross borrower from Latin, French, and Italian though he seems, he was the most original prose writer of his age, full of artistic theories as to the use of adjectives and the divinity of Aretino, Rabelais, Sidney, Marlowe, and "heavenly" Spenser, a connoisseur of metaphors and expletives and a bigoted devotee of the *mot propre.*

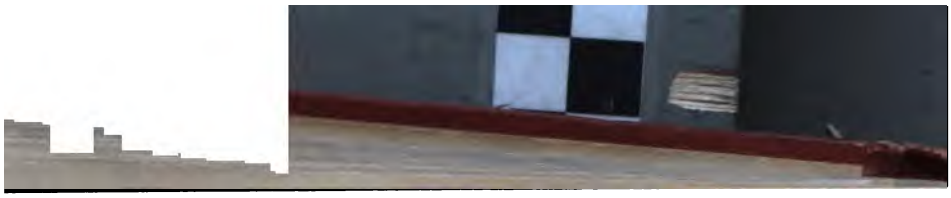
The work of Nash, with its numerous eccentricities of style, subject, and point of view, serves as a convenient

ster, conveyed figures and phrases from it wholesale into their plays. Sidney also wrote a masque, *The Lady of the May*, 1578, in which Rhombus, a schoolmaster, is a feeble prototype of Holofernes in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost.* As "warbler of poetic prose" Sidney was regarded with curiosity by Cowper, with scholarly interest by Southey, and with contempt by Horace Walpole, who calls his romance "tedious, lamentable, pedantic pastoral."



link between the novelists and the satirical essayists, who literally swarmed in London during the late and post-Elizabethan periods. The prince of these pamphleteers, excelling in fluency and facetious quaintness, and a very Defoe in respect of ductility, was Thomas Dekker. More vividly even than Nash and Greene he takes us back to the crooked lanes, the gabled houses, and creaking signs of old London. The crude verbiage in which so much of Dekker's humour is enshrouded soon rendered his books obsolete, but as a mirror of the manners of his time they are as invaluable as those of *Tom Brown* and *Ned Ward* of the age of Queen Anne, while in literary quality they are superior. Indirectly they have formed the groundwork of almost every attempt to arrive at a clear picture of the social life of the period.

Dekker's plays are full of sidelights upon the social life of the day. But even richer in this kind of material are the series of prose tracts commenced in 1603 with *The Wonderful Yeare.* In this he describes the death of the Queen, the proclamation at the Coronation of the King, concluding with a vivid picture (with which Defoe must have been familiar) of the ravages caused by the plague. He returned to the subject in one of his last tracts, penned when people were fleeing from the city, and entitled *A Rod for Runawayes* (1625). In the same year, 1603, appeared his *Batchelor's Banquet,* a satire on different types of women suggested by the fifteenth-century *Quinze Joies de Mariage.* From the sermonising tones of *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606) Dekker passes by an easy transition to a coarse volume of *Jests to make you Merrie* (1607), a favourite of Robert Burton's. *The Belman of London,* which went through three editions in 1608, is a skilful *rifacimento* of Harman's *Caveat for Commen Cursetors.* Dekker anticipates Vidocq in describing the different varieties of rogues, such as priggers, kinchin



coves, swigmen, and others; and he follows this up by *Lanthorne and Candlelight,* describing fresh types of suburban scoundrelism. In 1609 appeared the most graphic of all his sketch books, *The Guls Hornbook.* The tract is to some extent modelled on the German Dedekind's *Grobianus* (1549), a world-famous satire of bad manners, inverted etiquette, gross living, eccentric garb and slovenly habits. It had been Dekker's intention to turn portions of *Grobianus* into English verse, and he admits that his book retains a relish of Grobianism, but on further reflection he altered the shape, and of a Dutchman fashioned a mere Englishman. His sketch remains the most vivid picture that can be found of the night side of the town and of the manners and customs of the Jacobean gallant. It is particularly valuable for its caricatures of the playgoers of Shakespeare's prime.

In prose essay as in lyrical eclogue Dekker is perhaps surpassed by the lighter vein and more facile touch of Nicholas Breton. One of the best of the prose tracts that came from this versatile pen is one of the very earliest, an angling idyll called *Wits Trenchmour in a Conference had betwixt a Scholler and an Angler,* 1597, in which but for the interminable digressions to which he was so prone, Breton might have rivalled his successor, Izaak Walton, upon his own ground. In the same year Breton wrote *The Figure of Foure,* in which proverbial small change is served up in various ways. There is no controverting many of Breton's propositions. He advances in fours: four good medicines—abstinence, exercise, mirth, patience: four men needful in an army—a good commander, a good scout, a good sentinel, and a good gunner: four chief notes of a good housewife—early rising, close gathering, safe keeping, and well bestowing. There is more humour in the *Court and Country,* 1618, the old controversy of the debating society between the town



courtier and the rustic. The speeches are formal and much too long; but the champions begin to kindle to their work when the courtier imputes an evil smell of garlic to the countryman, who retorts that his town cousin stinks of tobacco. In *Fantasticks,* 1626, Breton gives us compact little essays on the world, money, love, harvest, spring, summer, and then the months seriatim. Those on April and May are prose pastorals, as delicate as those of Washington Irving, and less artificial. After the months come the hours, and so round the clock to an end. These charming vignettes of Breton's are almost as rich in material for social portraiture as those of Dekker; they are written, too, with racy spontaneity in a vernacular undefiled either by coarseness or affectation.

Among Dekker's rivals in exploring the seamy side or vagabondage of the metropolis should at least be enumerated Samuel Rowlands, who in *Martin Markall,* 1610, professes to correct Dekker's observations on the roaring boys of the town contained in *The Belman.* His *Letting of Humours Blood in the Head-vaine* was so scandalous that it was burned with contumely in the kitchen of the Stationers' Company. *The Search for Money,* 1609, of William Rowley, the dramatist, shows how popular these now obscure attempts to dredge the sewers for eccentric types once were. But all these so-called satires were partially, at any rate, vamped up from materials turned over by Greene, Peele, and Nash. Better known, by name at least, is the earlier and puritanically motived *Anatomie of Abuses,* by Philip Stubbes.

The time was now approaching—late in James's and early in Charles I.'s time—when a regular epidemic of short, generalised character-sketches broke out in England. This is not, like the sonnet-mania, to be traced directly to France, for there is little doubt that the impulse was due to the translation of the Greek *Characters* of Theophrastus



into Latin, made by Isaac Casaubon in 1592.[1] Theophrastus (died 284 B. C.) was the initiator of the *genre,* which is a very difficult one. Fine portraiture is not possible under its conditions. No two men are exactly alike, and a portrait cannot at once portray a class and an individual. The ideal is to hit the mean between abstract statement and details calculated to rob the portrait of all generic interest. In this Theophrastus succeeded so well that he was not surpassed in seventeenth-century England, though most of the wits, from Hall and Overbury and Earle to Butler and Halifax, put their best work into the attempt. It remains a question whether he was surpassed by La Bruyère in France.

Joseph Hall, who had in 1597 produced his *Toothlesse Satyrs,* and in 1605 (in Latin) his strange satirical allegory of *Mundus Alter et Idem,* suffered to appear in 1608 his noteworthy *Characters of Vertues and Vices in Two*

[1] It is true that something in the nature of the "character" had appeared in England long before Casaubon's version of Theophrastus, for in 1565 John Awdeley produced his *Fraternitye of Vacabondes,* followed two years later by Thomas Harman's *Caveat for Commen Cursetors, or Vagabones,* a curious series of essays on various kinds of thieves, tramps, and beggars, with their slang. Harman was freely imitated, not to say copied, by Dekker, in his *Belman of London,* while Dekker had independently produced something closely approximating character-sketches in his *Batchelor's Banquet* of 1603, as had several of the writers of the innumerable touchstones, glasses, mirrors and anatomies of the hour. But such productions as these could hardly have led to the Theophrastian essay, at which, as we should have expected, first attempts were made by notable scholars—to wit, Joseph Hall and Ben Jonson. Most of Jonson's plays are "character" plays, and in the *dramatis personæ* of *Every Man out of his Humour,* first printed in 1600, he condenses his conceptions into the form of a series of labels which are in effect character-sketches. (See West's Introduction to Earle, and Miss Lee's Introduction to *Selections from La Bruyère and Vauvenargues.* 1092.)



Books. Hall's "Characterisms," as he calls them, are directly modelled on Theophrastus; pithy and well-balanced, his phrasing gave the note to all his successors; but the tone of the work is too abstract, and the moralising and balancing of good qualities against bad is unnecessarily obtruded. Yet his *Characters* signal the vogue the full force of which was felt some six years later in *A Wife, now the Widow of Sir Thomas Overbury . . . whereunto are added many witty characters and conceited newes.*

Sir Thomas Overbury, born in Gloucestershire in 1581, took a bachelor's degree from Queen's College, Oxford, in 1598, entered the Middle Temple, and then travelled. He became the adviser and "governor" of the favourite Rochester, whom he had first met at Edinburgh, and perhaps subsequently abroad. His *Observations* upon the Netherlands were circulated in manuscript, and Overbury obtained a great reputation for his wit at court. *The Wife,* a didactic poem, written in 1613, was flattered by numerous imitations. The poem is stated to have been written to dissuade Rochester from marriage with such a woman as Lady Essex. The lady, at any rate, took umbrage at Overbury's secret influence over the Earl. She managed to get her enemy shut up in the Tower, where on September 15th, 1613, the unhappy man was poisoned. Appended to *The Wife,* as issued the second time in 1614, were a number of characters by Overbury and his friends. They rapidly grew in successive editions from twenty-one to as many as eighty, of which ten only are true characters. The rest are concerned with such peculiarities as are developed by certain occupations or positions in life. These are curious as illustrating manners, of which Overbury was a quick observer. But for the delineation of character in the proper sense, Overbury and his court friends had no very great talent. They were concerned



primarily with tricks of speech and behaviour rather than moral qualities. Their portraits are frequently neither typical, distinctive, nor humorous. They are rather lively, entertaining, and quaint. Overbury sacrifices humour to epigram, and perception of subtle differences to the demands of a pretty wit. What a satisfaction to find him laying aside his cleverness for once, and producing a sympathetic picture like that of *The Franklin!* And with this may be ranked *The Good Wife, The Worthy Commander,* and *The Milkmaid.* Breton's *The Goode and the Badde, or England's Selected Characters, describing the good and bad Worthies of this Age,* first appeared in 1616. Every tiny little pamphleteer now began to place "Characters" in large type in his shop-front. Two years elapsed, and the best of the bunch came from the pen of a young Oxford scholar, John Earle.

John Earle, a native of York, where his father was registrar of the Archbishop's Court, graduated from Christ Church in 1619, and became a probationer fellow of Merton in 1620. He was with Chillingworth and the other Oxford men who resorted to Falkland's house at Great Tew. During the troubles he went abroad, made a Latin version of the *Eikon Basilike,* another (which went under the grate) of the *Ecclesiastical Polity,* eventually became Bishop of Salisbury, and died in the Plague year at Oxford in the sixty-fifth year of his age.

The first edition of the *Microcosmographie; or A Peece of the World Discovered, in Essays and Characters,* appeared in 1628, containing fifty-four characters; twenty-three were added during 1629; one in the sixth edition, 1633. After 1629 it seems doubtful whether Earle concerned himself further about his "Characters." As far as he wrote from the results of his own observation, he succeeded in producing a series of lifelike and at the same time generic portraits adorned not by witty antitheses,



but by genuine flashes of insight into human nature. There is no methodical arrangement of the characters.[1] Among the best are *The College Butler, The Church Papist, The She Hypocrite, The Meer Gull Citizen, The Criticke.*

James I.'s fame as an author has undoubtedly suffered somewhat from his notoriety as a King. It may be admitted that he was a diffuse and pedantic writer; but though diffuse, there is often a pithy saying or an apt illustration to be gleaned from his furrow, and though pedantic he preferred to write in his native tongue, while he might have shone resplendent in Latin like his master, George Buchanan, or his persistent flatterer, Francis Bacon. He was naturally clever, had a tenacious memory, and a remarkable aptitude for classifying matters in his mind in accordance with the system then in vogue. James's juvenile production, *Essayes of a Prentice in the Divine Art of Poetry* (1584), was probably written as themes for his tutors. The *Meditations on the Revelations* (1589) show his theological bent. *Demonologie* (1597),

[1] They are kept within modest limits as regards length. In style they are somewhat monotonous, owing to the rather mechanical ply of the sentences; but they are pellucid, free from far-fetched conceits, and uncomplicated as regards syntax. There are singularly few obselete words, though, as in Bacon, words are often used in senses that have become uncommon or pedantic. At their best they exhibit the work of an observer, a philosopher, a humourist, and an artist. A French paraphrase appeared at Louvain in 1671.

Allied both to the character and didactic work of the period, may here be noticed the *Ten Precepts to his Son Robert*, written by Lord Burghley in Elizabeth's reign, though not published until 1637. In gnomic power—in weight of matter and depth of judgment—still more in worldly wisdom, these *Precepts* rival Bacon's *Essays*. They lack the wit and power of expression, but they have a homely force of their own that is impressive. The style, too, is clear, untrammelled by "conceited" imagery,



Basilikon Doron (1599), and *A Counter-blast to Tobacco* (1604) are his best known essays. He is most eloquent when he speaks of the divine hereditary right of kings, of the absolute truth of which strange tenet he seems to have had a sincere conviction. His prose works were collected in 1616. The *Basilikon Doron,* though teeming with quotations and references, is probably his most readable production, containing much good sense and shrewd worldly wisdom.

The one outstanding figure among the prose writers of the period—England's great coeval of Shakespeare and Galileo—has now to be brought prominently upon the scene.

Francis Bacon, younger son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper, was born at York House, between West Strand and the Thames, on January 22nd, 1561; he was thus, as he courtierly observed, "just two years younger than Her Majesty's happy reign." His mother, Ann,

wholly free from Italian phrasing and affectation, which the sound Aschamite and Protestant Burghley abhorred.

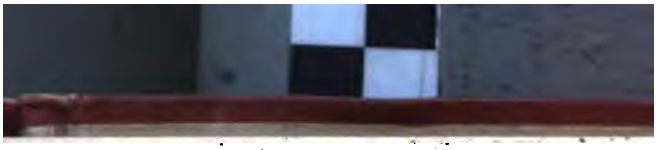
A place may here be found, too, for the "witty, grave, and sententious book" of Owen Feltham, of which the poet Randolph wrote:

> "Thy book I read, and read it with delight,
> *Resolving* so to live as thou do'st write."

The book so complimented was, of course, Feltham's *Resolves* of 1620 (or thereabout), a diligent, extra-didactic, but somewhat wishy-washy understudy of Bacon's *Essays.* They resemble, in more than one respect, especially in their somewhat specious smoothness and shallow veneer, the once popular eighteenth-century *Meditations* of Hervey. The prose style is for the period remarkably easy and fluent, the composition neat and accomplished; here and there may be detected an artistic finish and a proneness to literary equation and balance that suggest the manner of Hamerton's *Intellectual Life.* A modernised and "amended" edition of the *Resolves* was brought out by James Cumming in 1806.



FRANCIS BACON



daughter of Sir Anthony Cook, was a woman of scholarly accomplishment and was the translator of Jewel's Latin *Apology* for the Church of England (1564); her sister Mildred was the wife of Lord Burghley. When Francis Bacon was born, his cousin Robert Cecil, afterwards Lord Salisbury, was eleven years old. Francis went in April, 1573, to Trinity College, Cambridge, where, with Whitgift for his tutor, he learned to question the authority of Aristotle. In the fall of 1576, after being admitted to Gray's Inn, he went to Paris in the suite of our ambassador, Sir Amyas Paulet, and in the interests of diplomacy invented some highly ingenious ciphers; he had to return to England on his father's death in 1579. Having been called to the Bar he sat in Parliament for Melcombe Regis (1584), and during the next winter drew up his somewhat Machiavellian treatise of *Advice to Queen Elizabeth*. In 1586 he became a bencher of his Inn, and now sat for Taunton in Parliament. When the Marprelate controversy was raging in 1589 he sought to arbitrate between parties in his *Controversies of the Church of England*. He disliked the bigoted narrowness of the Puritan, but was convinced that the Church needed some reform and much greater elasticity. In the meantime he was diligently preferring his suit with Burghley and Walsingham, but the "tired suitor" was unable to secure a post, though he was continually in debt and always in want of money. He hungered and pined after office, but he barred his own path by an independent speech in Parliament. Within two years he was craving restoration to royal favour, but in 1595 the Earl of Essex, his new patron, generously gave him an estate at Twickenham. In 1594, while he was still engaged in suing, Bacon jotted down the extraordinary collection of extracts, proverbs, and happy thoughts, often of a mean and cynical character, to which he gave the name of *Promus* (*i. e.* dispenser



of formularies and elegances). The spirit of *Promus* animates the advice which Bacon gave to Essex, with a view to his more secure retention of his place as first favourite with the Queen. The same kind of cunning rather than the maturer wisdom of later instalments is apparent in the first edition of the *Essays* published in January, 1597; but the most deplorable manifestation of this same short-sighted sagacity is discerned in the part taken by Bacon in the proceedings against Essex. Probably in consenting to contribute to the destruction of his friend Bacon acted under considerable pressure. If he had refused the task assigned to him by the Crown, he would have had to give up all chance of the Queen's favour, and with it all hope of immediate promotion. Bacon was not the man to make such a sacrifice. He had a keen sense of the value of fortune, of the possibilities of a learned leisure, of the importance of his colossal plans for the benefit of the human race; on the other hand he had a very dull sense of the claims of honour and friendship; he preferred to be prosperous even at the cost of facilitating the ruin of a friend, for whom ruin in any case was ultimately inevitable.

The death of the Queen brought about a complete change in his prospects. His conduct to Essex was now viewed in a disparaging light, and although he was one of a large batch of legal knights, his first overtures to the new King appear to have been rebuffed. Yet Bacon was encouraged by the conviction that the new King, with his learned hobbies, his comprehensive ideas, and his aversion to intolerance, was susceptible in a high degree to philosophical advice. Hence his brief discourse touching the happy union between England and Scotland, and his treatise on the pacification and edification of the Church. In the latter he advocates drastic Church reform in the direction of elasticity of ceremonial and conciliation of



the Puritan conformists. He wrote, evidently, in ignorance of the temper of the King, who peremptorily rejected his advice. Bacon, who knew not his own mind till he knew the King's, promptly acquiesced in James's conservative views to the extent of calling in the printed copies of his treatise. In the new Parliament of 1604 he was on surer ground, and he quickly assumed a prominent position of conciliation to the new sovereign, extolling the prerogative, supporting the Union, advocating a subsidy, and the maintenance of the King's right of pre-emption. He at once received a pension, and devoted his leisure, previous to the reassembling of Parliament, in working at his masterly essay on *The Advancement of Learning,* published in 1605, which contains some of his finest writing and is described as the first great book in English prose of secular interest. It is the first also of a long line of books which have attempted to teach English readers "how to think of knowledge, to impress upon them all that knowledge might do in wise hands for the elevation and benefit of man; to warn them against the rocks and shallows of error and fallacy which beset the course of thought and inquiry, and to elevate the quest for truth and the acquisition of wisdom into the noblest aim and best assured hope of the human species."

In the summer of 1607 he became Solicitor-General and Clerk of the Star Chamber, a long-promised reversion for which he had waited nineteen years. The ardour of the pursuit for a position having abated, Bacon underwent a period of depression, as an antidote for which he addressed himself to philosophy, and settled a plan of his *Instauratio Magna,* or great renewal of learning, to which his treatise on *The Advancement of Learning* had been intended as but a portico, a preface or statement of general principles preliminary to the great work. In May, 1612, his cousin, Lord Salisbury, died; honours and



preferments were now flying about, and Bacon was suing for promotion in accordance with the system which he elaborated in his note-books with a thoroughness befitting an inductive philosopher and with an obsequiousness appropriate to the "King's chessman." He lost no time in suggesting to the King that he should be removed to business of state; but it was not until August, 1613, that he was substantially promoted to the post of Attorney-General. His progress to the woolsack was definitely assured in 1616, in which year he was appointed a Privy Councillor. Towards the close of the year he tendered a letter of advice to the rising star of the court, George Villiers, soon to become the Duke of Buckingham, and in March, 1617, he received the Great Seal with the title of Lord Keeper. Buckingham early showed his appreciation of Bacon's character by sending letters to him in favour of suitors who had cases pending in chancery. Their advancement went hand-in-hand, for in January, 1618, Buckingham was made a marquis, and Bacon Lord Chancellor, with the title of Baron Verulam. In October, 1620, was published all that was ever completed of his *Novum Organum* (or "Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature") and this date may be taken to mark the climax of his greatness. On January 27th, 1621, he was created Viscount St. Albans.

Bacon rather complimented himself on his suave manners and on his knowledge of people and Parliament, but he naturally excited the greatest hostility by the support he gave Buckingham and Mompesson in enforcing oppressive monopolies, and in his cold-blooded severity to the Attorney-General, Yelverton, who had incurred the spite of the favourite. In March, 1621, he was impeached for corruption, and, having admitted the truth of twenty-eight of the principal charges against him, he was sentenced to be fined £40,000, and to be imprisoned in the



Tower during the King's pleasure. He was also disqualified from sitting in Parliament or holding any office in the State. Of deliberately perverting justice for money Bacon was guiltless; but he had admittedly taken money from suitors; he had connived at the extortions of his servants, and had allowed himself to be browbeaten by the King's favourite in the administration of justice to an extent which must preclude us from pronouncing him incorrupt. His disgrace procured him for the remaining five years of his life a seclusion which, though involuntary, was none the less fruitful of work befitting a philosopher and a scholar. "Like precious odours, most fragrant when incensed or crushed," Bacon's virtues of patience, assiduity, and good temper were brought out by his adversity.

Freed from imprisonment after a two days' sojourn in the Tower, Bacon pursued his philosophic studies with little interruption, the *De Augmentis* (a translation with large additions of *The Advancement of Learning*), the completed edition of the *Essays, The History of Henry VII., The Advertisement* (dialogue-wise) *Touching on Holy War,* besides the *Sylva Sylvarum,* and some other fragments of the *Novum Organum,* all proceeded from his pen during his enforced retirement. He died on April 9th, 1626, owning an estate of £7,000, and debts amounting to upwards of £20,000. His bequests were superb in their munificence, but unhappily not one of them took effect.

No nation has been more willing to condone—or rather to shut its eyes upon—the moral blemishes or delinquencies of its great intellectuals than the English. To this rule, however, there are one or two conspicuous exceptions, notably Laurence Sterne and Francis Bacon. The flagrant indecency of Sterne has proved in the main too much for English decorum, while in the case of Bacon,



his notorious sale of justice and his unmistakable prepossessions in favour of autocracy have weakened the resistance to the plain evidence of the facts. Resplendent as Bacon's intellectual endowment was, giving to everything he wrote a classical atmosphere of solidity and magnanimity, his deficiency in regard to character and conduct is beyond the pale of wholesome apology. His mind was a typical late product of the European Renaissance, which in its early phases had produced Machiavelli. In Bacon's case, however, the remorseless utilitarianism of the Italian was complicated by the subtle and sophistical logic of Calvinism. Add to this the training he received as a boy amid the crooked tricks of policy and intrigue which infected the very atmosphere of the English court, and we shall get some idea of the factors that went to form his character. An opportunist so subtle that he could never make up his mind, Bacon's faith in such invaluable abstractions as truth and honour became fatally sophisticated. He wavered always between theory and practice, philosophy and politics, Latin and English, tyranny and oligarchy, philanthropy and self-advancement, religion and science. The higher he climbed the more independent he felt himself of the mere ordinary conventional distinction between right and wrong. The mighty intellect of Francis Bacon had become the instrument of a calculating and cold-blooded egotist, but an egotist without either a rudder, a compass, or a definite course. With a clear vision of what might be done for mankind by a man of science, a wise statesman, an able and honest lawgiver, Bacon himself, with his superlative endowment, was neither a pioneer of discovery, a faithful pilot of the ship of state, nor even a just judge. His scheme for the advancement of learning was the noblest thing of his life, but he neglected it and failed to arrive at any clear notion as to how the things he thought de-



sirable should be actually done. He said that knowledge was power, and aimed ostensibly above all at the advancement of learning; but actually he wasted his time in the pursuit of riches and titles, and in quest of new devices for trading upon the folly, the vanity, and the selfishness of man. Intellectually capable of almost anything, Bacon lacked that essential quality which in Shakespeare dominates other gifts, moral capacity. Few men have understood the faults of the human intellect better and few have comprehended defects in the moral nature worse. It is, nevertheless, this extraordinary quality of Bacon's nature which contributes more than anything to the differential value of his two almost priceless literary legacies, the *Essays* and the *History of Henry VII.*

The essay may be said virtually to be a new literary form of Montaigne's own invention. There is nothing exactly like it either in Latin or Greek. In classical literature Plutarch's *Morals,* Cicero's *Offices,* Pliny's *Epistles,* and Seneca's *Letters to Lucullus* are perhaps the nearest approach to the essay, but the resemblance is slight. Both Montaigne and Bacon use the word in its true sense as an essay or analysis of some subject of thought treated in a "dispersed" or desultory fashion. As assaying depends upon a close application of chemistry and mineralogy, so the essay owes its distinctive quality to a novel combination of philosophic and literary skill.

The famous *LVIII. Essayes* of Bacon that we know were a gradual growth. The first edition of 1597 comprised only ten essays; the second thirty-eight essays, of which twenty-eight were new in 1612; the third fifty-eight essays, of which twenty were new in 1625. The composition, correction, and augmentation of the essays thus extended over a period of nearly thirty years. They were planted under Elizabeth, watered under James, and attained their final growth under Charles. During this long interval



the thought with which they are enriched was being deposited in Bacon's mind. No other English aphorist, unless it be Emerson, approaches Bacon in conveying the impression of classic style combined with such concentration and energy of thought. It is just in this suggestion of fine old sap and venerable experience within a narrow compass that his work recalls that of the sages of the antique world. Bacon was a natural hoarder of thought and phrase, of pith and marrow. Of the mere flowers of speech he was sparing and economical. Each essay then is a cluster of detached thoughts, sentences, and maxims, forming a collection of happy epigrams, apothegms, and lucky citations grouped under approximate headings. There is no elaboration of style, and very little order. Thoughts are put down, and left unsupported, unproved, undeveloped. Their vitality is due in the main to their unusual combination of sagacity, wit, and terseness. Some of the most prosperous sayings in the language are packed into these secular sermons. Secondarily it is due to the interesting duality of the man of letters and the man of the world, the idealist and the creature of shifts and expedients which is so deeply marked in this little great son of man.

No less supreme in the realm of history than the *Essays* in the sphere which they adorned, Bacon's *History of Henry VII.* simply towers above the other historical prose of this epoch. His greatness can be estimated when we compare the finished work with the raw material out of which it was fashioned—the chronicles, namely, of Fabyan, Polydore, Virgil, Hall, Holinshed, and Stow. Poor and incomplete though these materials were, Bacon succeeded so well that he has left later historians but little to do. Subsequent researches have but confirmed and illustrated the truth of his history in all its main features. The portrait of Henry as drawn by him is the original of all



the portraits which have been drawn since. The good stories of the reign, such as those of Morton's form, Empson's fixed determination to "cut another chop" (£720) out of Alderman Sir William Capel, Henry's rebuke to the Earl of Oxford, and Maximilian's method of marriage by proxy with Anne of Brittany, are all related by Bacon, and it is amusing to trace how certain of his statements have been borrowed, perverted, and often disfigured by subsequent historical compilers. As compared with the dull, soulless, and uncritical compiling of his predecessors and contemporaries, the effect of Bacon's treatment of his materials resembled the bringing of a light into a dark room.

The movement of the narrative as a whole is rapid, and the style is singularly clear and unencumbered. Classical terms of phrase and words used in a strict classical or etymological sense (now obsolete) are much rarer than in the *Essays*. Long imaginary speeches put in the mouth of the Chancellor and others occasionally betray Latin models such as Livy and Sallust. The episodes, especially those dealing with the adventures of the two Pretenders, Simnel and Warbeck (the King was haunted with spirits by the magic and curious arts of the Lady Margaret), the establishment of the Star Chamber, Henry's intervention in the affairs of Britain (Brittany), and the wily diplomacy on both sides which surrounded this event, are introduced with an abundance of art. A ripple of humour, albeit saturnine, is more conspicuous than in any other of Bacon's works. Pithy and poignant sayings, as is the rule in his work, keenly stimulate the zest of the reader. But the reader's interest is primarily governed, as it should be, by the art with which Bacon gradually unfolds the character of his main figure, the monarch of whose nature his comprehension appears to be well-nigh perfect. Considered upon its own claims as an explana-



tion of events by reference to the feelings and purposes of the chief actor, it is perhaps a better model than any history that has been published since.[1]

[1] The magistral edition of Bacon's *Works* is that of Ellis and Spedding (7 vols., 1857); supplemented by *Letters and Life*, (7 vols., 1862-74). From this somewhat cumbrous *Life* Carlyle borrowed the plan of his *Cromwell*. A first-rate edition in one volume of *The Philosophical Works* was issued by Routledge in 1905 (ed. J. M. Robertson). This contains *The Advancement of Learning*, the *Magna Instauratio*, *Novum Organum* and *De Augmentis* (in English), *The New Atlantis*, *Essays*, *Apothegms*, and *De Sapientia Veterum* (also in translation); also minor fragments, virtually all, in fact, except *Henry VII*. The defects of Bacon's moral nature have perhaps been somewhat overstrained by Macaulay in his trenchant essay, by Dr. Abbott in his brilliant *Francis Bacon: An Account of His Life and Work* (1885), and to a less degree by Dean Church (1884) and Sidney Lee in *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century* (1904). A more lenient view is taken by Spedding, Professor Nichol (1890), J. M. Robertson, and Dr. S. R. Gardiner. Macaulay's theory of Bacon's character, which is little more than an amplification of Pope's hackneyed paradox as to the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind, was subjected to a very destructive analysis by Spedding in *Evenings with a Reviewer*. Like Herbert Spencer, and like Pope, and to some extent like Coleridge or De Quincey, of course in very different ways, Bacon eludes our sympathy. His character is the more liable to be traduced. On the other hand, his position as a Pilot in matters of Science has been exaggerated. Of the great inventors and philosophers of his day, such as Harvey, Fabricius, Harriot, Kepler, Napier, Galileo, and Gilbert, he knew practically nothing. The discoverer of the circulation of the blood said of him that he wrote philosophy like a Lord Chancellor. Hallam said that he might have been the High Priest of Nature had he not been Lord Chancellor of James I. But he gave little evidence of this capacity. His famous method was an impossible one. Poets and literary critics have lauded it to the skies, but quite innocuously, for men of science have instinctively avoided it. Bacon thought that the secrets of Nature could be analysed and dissected like a great Cryptogram; and he thought quite genuinely that in his new *Organum* he had dis-



covered the Clavis, for the use of the initiated. The great secret (the Inductive Method) was as old as Aristotle, or rather, very much older, since it implies that combined method of guessing and inference by which men have discovered almost everything that they know. It was well to deride dogma, deduction, convention, and other idols and obstructions to thought and progress. It was good to ponder on method, to argue for a better discipline in inference, and to plead for an open door to Inquiry in the widest possible sense. All this Bacon did memorably; but, when he came from the general to the particular, he paid the penalty of all who aspire to omniscience. In practical science he was far behind his own day. In prophetic vision of what Science might accomplish he is considerably ahead of 1906. We get an imaginative glimpse of this in his ultra-didactic and consequently somewhat grotesque but most attractively written *New Atlantis* (written about 1624-5, this popular fragment was published 1627). This wonderful island called the New Atlantis, lest we should confuse it with the great Atlantis (*i. e.* America), is situated, figuratively speaking, somewhere between More's Utopia and Swift's Laputa. The book forms a fitting epilogue to the Renaissance in England. In the counter-Renaissance that was impending Bacon would have been a strangely incongruous figure.



CHAPTER XI

ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN PROSE.—II

"O, eloquent, just, and mighty death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; whom none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet!*"—*History of the World.*

Raleigh — Stow — Holinshed — Speed—Camden—Knolles—Memoirs and Diaries—Manningham—Sir Symonds D'Ewes—Naunton—Moryson—Hakluyt—Elizabethan criticism—Gosson—Sidney's *Defense* and Johnson's *Timber.*

No history of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century approaches in modern interest the remarkable work of Bacon.

But apart from this the right of place must be accorded to the famous work of Raleigh, the brilliance of whose achievement as a man of action has thrown a kind of rainbow over his portentous *History of the World*—intended in the first instance as a portico to his *History of England under the Great Queen.* Of the England of that period Raleigh himself was a kind of epitome—as typical of his generation as Sidney was of his; even more versatile, a striking representative of the restless spirit of romantic adventure, mixed with cool practical enterprise that marked the time. Popular hero as he became after his death, in the heyday of his career Raleigh was a most unpopular favorite. His whole character seemed composed of opposites. As pedantic as Lord Herbert about his pedigree and his training in arms, a finished courtier,



reserved, magnificent, fearless, in talk incisive even when he spoke in broad Devon, in arts accomplished, by his wife and a few friends worshipped, by the majority of his contemporaries detested, Raleigh eclipsed them all, including Leicester, Sussex, Southampton, Hatton, and even Essex, in the romantic interest which his versatile career has inspired. The region of the Exe and the Otter, so prolific in great seamen; Oriel College; the fields of France, where he served a campaign or two against the League; the Middle Temple and the English camps in the south of Ireland witnessed the training of this paragon among the courtiers of the English Renaissance. In his early days he was famous for his patronage of Bruno, the advanced Italian thinker who was in England in 1583 and again in 1585. He was no less celebrated for his extravagant dress, his hatbands being often composed, we are told, of the costliest pearls. He was equally noted for his avarice and for the rich monopolies he obtained from the Queen and from the sequestrated estates of traitors. His wealth enabled him to build the superb vessel of 200 tons, as she was then deemed, the *Ark Raleigh,* the flagship of Admiral Howard in 1588, and to fit out the privateering and colonising expeditions which have given him a permanent place in English history. Fierce swashbuckler as he often appeared in his capacity of Captain of the Guard and rival of Essex for his royal mistress's favours, in the quiet study of Durham House overlooking the river Raleigh entertained and patronised with a rare urbanity some of the choicest spirits of the day, such as Spenser, Harriot, Hakluyt, Hooker, and Jonson.[1]

[1] Raleigh's career as a man of action may be briefly summarised. In 1596 he was there when Essex singed the Spanish king's beard in Cadiz harbour. The year previous he had sailed to Guiana in search of the fabled "El Dorado," destroying on the way the Spanish town of San José, and on his return he



But we are concerned here with his writings in prose. Of these, only three were published in his lifetime, *The Fight about the Isles of the Azores* (1590), *The Discovery of Guiana* (1596), and the *History of the World*. The *History* was written in the Tower, where, though Raleigh was comparatively well-treated and indulged in chemical experiments, the society of friends, and other diversions, he necessarily had much time upon his hands, between 1607 and 1614. In large portions of the work he was greatly aided by learned friends. Thus Dr. Burhill assisted him in the interpretation of Hebrew; Harriot was his oracle on disputed questions of chronology or geography; John Hoskins, the arbiter of style, friend of Donne and Selden and informant of Aubrey, is said to have revised the whole work for press; Ben Jonson also read

published his *Discovery of the Empire of Guiana*. He took a director's part in the colonisation of Virginia, and introduced tobacco and potato plants into Europe. But in 1603 his career as courtier was blighted. Arrested for conspiring with the miserable Lord Cobham against the fox and his cubs (James I. and his children), he attempted suicide in the Tower. Coke, at his trial, set an example which Jeffreys hardly eclipsed, "thou"-ing the prisoner, calling him "viper" or "spider of hell." Condemned to die, Raleigh was under the shadow of this sentence until 1618, when he was sacrificed (October 29th), in part as a propitiatory offering to Spain, after the inevitable failure of his forlorn raid in Guiana. From 1604, after the parody of justice witnessed at his trial (not that Raleigh was guiltless, but that the Crown lawyers were infamous), and since his solitary walks in the Tower were observed by huge crowds, who saw in him one of the last of the little band of heroes of the late reign who sailed beyond the sunset and bore the brunt of the duel with the might of Catholic Spain, Raleigh had become a popular hero. His angry temper, his headstrong arrogance, his overweening ambition, and his damnable pride (as Aubrey had it) were forgotten, and so the strange career of the poet, soldier, scholar, buccaneer, and spoiled courtier was concluded by the superposition of a martyr's crown and halo.



the work in manuscript and claimed to have written, with other sections, much of the narrative of the Second Punic War.

There is no doubt that the liveliest passages came direct from Raleigh's pen, such as the preface, the conjecture that the Garden of Eden and its rivers were rightly to be found in South America, the illustrative comments drawn from contemporary history, the digressions dealing with abstract questions of law, theology, philosophy, and magic, or the ideal form of government, the elaborate portraits of historical personages—Epaminondas, Jezebel, Pyrrhus or Semiramis (a veiled portrait of the Great Queen of his own day), and finally the magnificent apostrophe to "eloquent, just and mighty Death," with which the *History* closes—all these are unmistakably Raleigh. The intervening chronicle portions are often extremely lifeless: much of this compilation may well have been the work of erudite assistants under Sir Walter's supervision.

The first part of the contemplated *History* was alone published in the early part of 1614 (two impressions, a second edition followed in 1617), and this brought the work down no farther than 130 B. C., or roughly from chaos to Antiochus the Great. In two subsequent parts of which a few preparatory notes remain Raleigh had intended to bring his history down to 1603. The work involved was greatly encouraged by Raleigh's consistent advocate and hero-worshipper, the young Prince Henry, for whom the prisoner wrote a number of small educational treatises, and upon his death in 1612 the historian lost heart and interest in his colossal undertaking. It remains a signal monument to one of the most interesting and paradoxical figures of this difficult and perplexing era, and as one of the curiosities of rather than vital contributions to English Literature.

The remaining historians of the Elizabethan era, putting



aside Bacon and Raleigh, can be treated in a very brief space. Fuller wrote humorously of the good purpose to which those honest tailors, John Stow and John Speed, had stitched away at English history for the benefit of future generations. Most of the historical compiling was done after this pattern. Raphael Holinshed had continued his *Chronicles of England* down to 1575, and his noteworthy folio had appeared in 1578 in ample time to prove of yeoman service to Marlowe, Greene, Shakespeare, and contemporary masters of the historic drama. Holinshed died shortly after the publication, but the work was edited with a supplement by John Hooker in 1586.[1]

[1] One of the most graphic and entertaining narratives of the Elizabethan period is contained in Harrison's *Description of England*, a kind of topographical outwork to the *Chronicle* of Holinshed. It was written by William Harrison, Londoner and Oxonian (Christ Church), who died Winsor canon in 1593, *æt.* 59. The chronicle was a printer's hodge-podge, but Harrison's animated description of England changing before his eyes leavens the whole mass of uninspired annalising. In its ruder fashion it almost deserves comparison with Macaulay's famous third chapter, or the inspired tableau of France in the third chapter of the second volume of Michelet's *Histoire*. About the churches and their services, ministers and covetous patrons, he tells us much at first hand. Bells and times of prayer and much stained glass still remained. Images, shrines, rood-lofts, tabernacles, wakes, and bride-ales he gives as superstitions of the past (this in 1577). The "prophecyings" were just beginning to come in. The English bishops, says he, were the most learned in Europe, though in gluttony they fell short of their predecessors. Oxford and Cambridge are equal in greatness, so that it is impossible to discriminate between them. He bemoans the high prices, ever rising in spite of England's increased traffic. Wheat bread is a luxury for the rich. The beer, however, is better, or at any rate stronger, than of old. Men took two meals a day only—dinner and supper—and each class had its own hour for dining. In matters of attire he found his countrymen so mutable that, except it were a dog in a doublet, you shall not see any so disguised—women have



Meanwhile in 1565 John Stow (d. 1605), originally a tailor, a friend and protégé of Archbishop Parker, and one of the antiquarian society founded by that great Churchman, had compiled from a larger basis of original authorities his *Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* (1565); this was followed by his more compendious *Chronicles of England* 1580, from which was developed the subsequent and better known *Annales of England* (1592, and subsequent editions), and finally in 1598 appeared his invaluable *Survey of London,* the basis of all modern London topography. The chief contemporary rival to the *Annales* of Stow was the well-digested *History of Great Britaine* (1611) by another wielder of the shears, the diligent John Speed (1552—1629) of Moorfields. The corresponding *Britannia* (1586) of the scholarly William Camden (1551—1623), head of Westminster School and Clarenceau King-at-Arms, was written in Latin and was not Englished by Holland until 1610, but his *Remains and Annals of Elizabeth,* written in 1605 and 1615 respectively, were written in English. Sir John Hayward (1564—1627), as became a somewhat larger experience of life, took a more political and less dry-as-dust view of the historical past in his *First Part of the Life and Raigne of Henry the IVth,* which he dedicated with much temerity

become men and men transformed into monsters. In the manner of building and furnishing houses, he notes three important changes in his time—chimneys, bedding, and plate (to which add glass windows) had all been multiplied to admiration. But with these refinements he laments rise of rents and growth of usury. Then, as now, work was scamped, horsedealers were often rogues, Roman coins were dug up, English ships were famous, vagabonds, Egyptians, harlots, and scolds were incorrigible, the fox and badger were preserved by gentry for sport. Beavers lingered on the Tavy (?). English brawn was deemed the rarest treat in foreign parts. An odd story is told of certain Jews in Spain being inveigled into eating it on the supposition that it was fish.



in 1599 to the service of Essex. It very nearly cost him his head, and Elizabeth herself expressed a desire that he should be racked; but he lived to enjoy the favour of James I., and to write his *Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixt,* published in 1630, which Edmund Bolton holds up in his *Hypercritica* as a model for the future historian along with the histories of More, Raleigh, and Bacon. Richard Knollys (1550—1610) had the good luck to light upon an untrodden path in a Latin *History of the Turks,* published at Frankfort in 1596. Like Watson with Spain, he had Ottoman history practically to himself. Six or seven editions of his folio *Generall Historie of the Ottoman Turks* appeared within a century of its first appearance (1603), and "Old Knolles" was warmly eulogised by Dr. Johnson, Southey, Hallam, Kingsley, Lane-Poole, and above all, Byron; but is is significant that no edition of the work has appeared since 1700.

We need not speak here of Spottiswoode on the Scots Church, of Heylyn on the Reformation, of Lord Herbert's *Henry VIII.,* or of Fuller's *Crusades* and other historical compilations. More characteristic really is the great amount of accumulative work done by such men as Parker, Twysden, Selden, Dugdale, Carew, Cotton, Coke, Spelman, Weever, Wyrley, Vincent, Brooke, Bodley, and others, most of whom are mentioned elsewhere. Antiquaries were beginning to be found to take thought for the tools and materials of future historians. Such were Ralph Agas (d. 1621) and Speed, the great map-makers; William Watts, chaplain to Rupert, who in 1640 edited the *Historia* of Matthew Paris; the grave and courtly Thomas Bedingfield, who translated the *Florentine History* of Machiavelli in 1595; Sir Henry Savile, translator of the *Histories* of Tacitus (1591); or Sir Symonds D'Ewes (1602—1650), author of the *Journals of all the Parliaments during the reign of Queen Elizabeth,* who



lived to undergo the indignity of being expelled by Colonel Pride in 1648. The literary value is not great, but the historical value almost priceless.[1]

A sub-species of the chronicle out of the full-dress biography is the memoir, and it is characteristic of the last twenty-five years of the sixteenth century, which saw so many experiments both in life and in literature, that it should witness the rude commencements of this delightful art of memoir-writing in the modern sense. Memoir," of course, is a very elastic term, including autobiographical diary (Pepys), diurnal of occurrences (Luttrell), and a worked-up chronicle of contemporary events (Walpole). The best specimens[2] contain all three elements, as in St. Simon; and in Elizabethan time we already can recognise specimens of each species. In the first class we have Forman, Manningham, Dee, Wilbraham, and Yonge; in the second D'Ewes, Henslowe, Camden, and Bodley; in the third Melville, Bannatyne, Spottiswoode, Baillie, Moysie, the Scots annalists, to whom

[1] Closely akin to this may be noticed *The History of the Parliaments of England* (1640-43) by the versatile and not oppressively truthful or honest Thomas May of Mayfield (1595—1650), secretary and apologist of the Long Parliament, translator of Lucan, author of tragedies, verse-chronicles, and *The Heir*, a comedy, 1622.

[2] Of the minor diarists, Sir Thomas Bodley (1545—1613) is brief and somewhat formal. Henslowe's is a professional diary and play notebook by the notorious dramatic manager; Alexander Daniel's from 1617 onwards is genealogical, chronological, and local in character; Dee's is a learned professional diarial with quaint memorabilia of his life; Sir Thomas Hoby's, which closes early in 1654, is largely composed of travel notes; the Scottish memoirs are very valuable historically, especially in ecclesiastical matters (incorporated wholesale by Calderwood and later historians). Books of engraved portraits with short Lives were furnished by Henry, the bookseller son of Philemon Holland.



we might perhaps add Carey and Winwood. Most of them are somewhat rudimentary as regards development: the more self-conscious forms, such as the literary memoir and the confession, are practically absent. They are nevertheless of much interest both from their intrinsic value and from the literary influence of a much-needed kind which they must have exercised upon narrative prose.

A very typical diary in which records of a few salient historical events are diversified by multitudes of notices of persons of social distinction with personal details, portents and records of sermons in the summarising of which nearly all the diarists of the period show an abnormal skilfulness is the diary of John Manningham, a gentleman of Brabourne, Kent, and of the Middle Temple, who discussed Queen Elizabeth's illness with her physician, Dr. Parry, collected much gossip in the Temple Hall, recorded his visit to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in 1602, and died some twenty years later. His closely written and compact diary, after lying obscurely in the Harleian Collection for over two hundred years, was detected by the keen eye of Mr. Collier as containing a Shakespeare reference in 1831, and thirty-seven years later was transcribed and edited by Mr. Bruce. Apart from the frequent allusions to legal luminaries there are many other interesting anecdotes and personalia in these long-forgotten pages. The unfortunate Overbury comes before us several times, such as we should have expected to find him, inconsiderate and impetuous. Ben Jonson flits across the page. Of Marston there is a disagreeable anecdote which has not been left unnoticed by poetical antiquaries. Sir Thomas Bodley and Lord Deputy Mountjoy are alluded to. There is an excellent account of an interview with old Stow the antiquary, a valuable glimpse of the Cromwell family during the boyhood of the Protector, and references, some of them of importance, to Sir Walter Raleigh, to his



foolish friend Lord Cobham, to the wizard Earl of Northumberland, and, of course, many allusions to the Cecils, both to Sir William and to the youngest son, to whom, according to the joke which is here preserved, his father's wisdom descended as if it had been held by the tenure of Borough-English. Some of Manningham's descriptions of the preachers whom he patronised are most realistic. "At Paules," he wrote in 1602, "one preached with a long browne beard, a hanging look, a gloating eye, and a tossing learing gesture. In the afternoon at Foster Lane, one Clappam, a 'blacke' fellow with a sour look, but a good spirit, bold and sometimes bluntly witty, and he preached about Rahab"—a queer text and queer sermon.

Sir Roger Wilbraham of the old Cheshire family, Master of Requests to Queen Elizabeth, died in 1616. He was at Gray's Inn with Bacon, and was knighted at the same time as Sir Julius Cæsar by James I., at Greenwich, soon after his arrival in London. A lawyer, and a man of affairs, who sat in Parliament under James I., and had official and judicial experience in Ireland, Wilbraham's comments are not those of the man in the street, but are judicious and carefully weighed. His abstracts of speeches in Parliament are full of interest, and confirm the subserviency of tone adopted towards Elizabeth to the very close of her reign. His account of her and of James's accession and his attempt to compare their characters show that he had some literary ambition in inditing his journal.

John Rous, a respectable clergyman, from Emmanuel, Cambridge, a native of Hessett in Suffolk, appointed minister in James I.'s reign of Weeting and Santon Downham, began diarising before 1612, but most of his original drafts are lost. From his loophole in the country he observed and recorded and collected materials in a small way. He was no partisan, a fair scholar, hostile to the Duke of Bucking-



ham and to all papists, but generally inclined to be tolerant (see a lively account by him of Buckingham's assassination, and some rather gruesome details of William Utting the toad-eater). Another diarist of the same class is Walter Yonge. He commenced his Diary very soon after Elizabeth's death; it was found quite by accident at Taunton among a lot of old books; came into possession of George Roberts, the Lyme Regis antiquary, and was edited by him in 1848. It is a good specimen of the common sense and wide information possessed by a West Country Puritan justice of the peace in the south of Devon under James I. The diaries of Rous and Yonge are comparatively of humble and local interest; but they show the kind of simultaneous instinct by which educated people in every grade began recording events in a more or less systematic way about this time, with a kind of half-suppressed consciousness that they were living upon a great stage in which events momentous in their interest to posterity might occur at any time.

One of the most interesting and typical in many respects of the personal narratives of the period is the Latin *Autobiography* of Father John Gerard. A much-persecuted Jesuit, he managed to escape from England about 1606 and then set to work and wrote a detailed account of the Gunpowder Plot—an account exculpatory of the Catholics as a whole, and specially designed to exonerate and indeed to beatify Father Garnet—Saint Garnet as Yonge indignantly declares that the papists call him. About three years after this he wrote his very interesting *Autobiography*. We have an extraordinary picture of the fanaticism—if that be the proper word—of this devoted man, playing hide-and-seek with the priest-baiters such as Topcliffe and Anthony Munday, the Balladino of *The Case is Altered*, feeing the gaoler who put his fetters on, but refusing to give him anything for taking



them off, shuffling about in these fetters in his narrow cell until the rust wore off and they became as bright as polished steel, and jangling them noisily so that they might drown the sound of Geneva psalms going on beneath him.

Robert Carey's account of the circumstances of Elizabeth's death will always possess interest. He was a grandson of Mary Boleyn, the Queen's aunt; he was always rather a favourite, and when he went to see the Queen at Richmond in March, 1603, he was promptly admitted and found her sitting low upon her cushions; in anticipation of her death he made his arrangements, and in spite of the watchfulness of the guards he managed to escape from the closed palace and to reach Holyrood, in spite of a bad kick from his horse, upon the third day. For the moment he obtained his reward—a post about the King; but reflection upon the indecency of his haste led James eventually to revoke his appointment!

The *Autobiography* of Sir Symonds D'Ewes is a distinct and very interesting type, linking the personal autobiography proper with the diurnal of occurrences, for it is in its inception an autobiography based upon a diary. The diary begins to expand into some fulness at the time of Overbury's murder in 1616. D'Ewes was only about fourteen at the time, but he was a most precocious youth, and was, in fact, a born memoir-writer, like Horace Walpole—observant, close, censorious, narrow, indefatigable with his pen, very jealous and sensitive to the lightest offence, timid, and devoid of masculine tastes. D'Ewes was in many ways a type of the white-blooded Laodicean and rather feline diarist. He has perhaps been unduly attacked by Wood, Hearne, and other stalwart Tories, but he was certainly far from being a genial character.

With D'Ewes we are among the diurnalists—recorders and commentators from day to day like Narcissus Luttrell,



Madame D'Arblay, Mrs. Delany, and Greville. And even in Jacobean times we have the quidnuncs Sir Dudley Carleton (1573—1632), John Chamberlain (1553—1627), George Carew, Baron Carew, and Sir James Melville. And their letters, like those of Horry Walpole, are really memoirs under a very thin disguise, exhibiting the same extraordinary facility and diverting flow of casual everyday narratives.

Carleton's style is exceptionally clear and fluent; few writers have surpassed him in making his meaning obvious without effort and without unnecessary verbiage. And of all his correspondents the most kindred spirit is John Chamberlain, of Trinity College, Cambridge. Both were university men who had travelled widely, and Carleton especially had a keen insight into all the intricacies and delicacies of diplomatic life. Both were eclectics, humourists in a quiet way, connoisseurs, and gossips.

Sir Robert Naunton (1563—1635) was an inveterate old courtier of the Tudor *régime,* who warily and stealthily made his way to the secretaryship mainly by the sufferance of Buckingham. From that point of view, in a few intervals of leisure, he made notes upon the characters of his contemporaries and predecessors in office. These he worked up in Charles's reign into his *Fragmenta Regalia,* which is interesting as a link between characters and memoirs proper, and also as foreshadowing the elaborate characters which later artists such as Clarendon, Burnet, Hervey, and Hume worked into their histories or memoirs.

A short interval only separates the historical from the geographical gossips—the travellers such as Coryat, Fynes Moryson, William Lithgow, and Sir George Sandys, who wrote such monumental narratives of the wanderings from city to city and from land to land.

Fynes Moryson (1566—1630), a Lincolnshire and Peterhouse man, obtained licence to travel in 1590, and



his portentous *Itinerary,* dealing partly with his journeys in central and southern Europe, partly with the art of travel generally, was put forth in 1617 (a fourth part remained in MS. until 1903). More amusing, though scarcely less voluminous, are the travels of Thomas Coryat (1577—1617), an unofficial court jester who concealed a passion for travel under his motley, and set out on a wonderful tour from his native Odcombe in Somerset in 1608. His *Coryat's Crudities Hastily Gobled Up,* as his itinerary was grotesquely called, appeared in folio in 1611. The more academic but hardly less entertaining *Travel Relation* of George Sandys, who journeyed in Egypt and the Holy Land, appeared in 1615, and William Lithgow's *Rare Adventures and Painfull Peregrinations* in 1632. William Parry's *Discourse of the Travels of Anthony Sherley* appeared in 1601. Captain John Smith, of Virginia, wrote a famous but partly apocryphal narrative of his European travels, *True Travels* (1636). The travels of Sir Thomas Overbury, Sir Robert Dallington, Sir Thomas Herbert, and John Evelyn are all the work of highly scholarly and observant men, but have less individuality and more of the impersonal and diplomatic character than the preceding. Heylyn, Corbet, and Braithwaite are noticed elsewhere.

For the logs and yarns of the sea-farers as opposed to the land-faring journals of the epoch we are indebted almost exclusively to Richard Hakluyt (1552—1616), who from the time that he was a boy at Westminster discovered a positive passion for cosmography and voyagers' narratives. These as time went on, and he became a well-beneficed dignitary of the Church, and a facile discharger of archidiaconal functions, he collected into his well-known *Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589, enlarged 1598-1600). Most of the greatest captains of the day upon whose lips



Hakluyt had hung entranced are represented in this monster collection, which is of the utmost interest in the history of commerce, shipping, travel, colonisation, and philology, the narrative, which is frequently the compiler's own, being constantly heightened by the air of adventure and glamour of the period, while here and there are to be found splendid reaches of English prose. A successor and continuator of Hakluyt, though of somewhat inferior calibre, was found in Samuel Purchas (1577—1626), whose *Pilgrimes* came out in four volumes in 1625. Finally, before quitting topography we must just name those eminent pioneers of England's noble series of County Histories, John Norden's *Speculum Britanniæ* and Erdeswicke's *Survey of Staffordshire,* commenced 1593, Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent,* Stow's *Survey* of 1598, Carew's *Survey of Cornwall,* 1602.

The writings of the Elizabethan critics are primarily apologies for Poets and Poetry against the onslaught of Precisians and Puritans. By writers such as John Northbrooke (*Treatise wherein Dicing, Dawncing, Vaine Playes, etc., are Reproved,* 1577), Stephen Gosson (*The Schoole of Abuse . . . a Pleasaunt Invective against Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, etc.,* 1579, and *Playes Confuted,* 1582), Philip Stubbes (*The Anatomie of Abuses,* 1583), George Whetstone (*A Touchstone for the Time,* 1584), William Rankins (*Mirrour of Monsters,* 1587), Dr. Rainolds (*Overthrow of Stage Players,* 1599), and others, the early Christian tradition of the iniquity of plays, songs, and merry tales was wrested with little regard to the context from Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, and Chrysostom, and hurled at the exponents of *belles lettres* collectively, and without any attempt to discriminate between poets and balladmongers. They attacked the vices of the playhouse, and the dangers of foreign influence through literature. Against these "poet-whippers," as Sidney



called them, there sprang up a school of vigorous protest headed by Thomas Lodge, Sidney himself, Sir John Harington, Daniel, and Heywood. They defend poetry both on historical and on abstract grounds. Poetry they held was universal in its antiquity. All great nations had practised it, and all great princes patronised it. Poetry was of divine origin, moral and artistic in its aim, summarised by Webbe as "to mingle delight with profit in such wise that a reader might by his reading be partaker of both." To the time-honoured objections that poets were liars and wantons and their readers fools for their pains they furnish answers equally old and equally hackneyed.

From these beginnings the critics go on to discuss more purely literary problems such as the classification of literary types or genres, the necessity of studying classical models, the need of symmetry and restraint, of bringing order into the chaos of English prosody, of refining the vernacular diction threatened by the present influx of new words and new forms. Here again were sides of controversy, Gabriel Harvey, Wilson, Puttenham, Webbe, Thomas Drant, Thomas Campion (and even if we do not include Sidney), most of the familiar names being strongly in favour of a classical programme and a classical or quantitative prosody, their object being, in Harvey's words, "to pull down rhyming and set up versifying" after Latin models; the champions of the other, and as it proved the winning, side were far less noted personages.

One of these was Richard Mulcaster, noted in his day as a schoolmaster, who wrote in 1581 in his book on *Training up Children,* "I love Rome, but London better; I favour Italy, but England more; I honour the Latin, but worship the English." Another was Sir Richard Carew, the Cornish antiquary and translator of Tasso, who penned in 1596 his *Excellency of the English Tongue,* and finally there was Samuel Daniel, the poet, who in his *Defense of*



Rhyme of 1602 gave the *coup de grâce* to the academic theory that English verse ought to be built upon classical lines. The books of lasting value and interest which emerged from these early debates upon the first principles of the literary art were two in number, Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (or, as a rival printer had it, *Defense of Poesie*), 1595, and Jonson's oddly named *Timber, or Discoveries,* first printed in 1641. Sidney's theory of poetry (classification of genres, and vindication of the superiority of poetry over its two chief rivals, history and philosophy) may be termed an epitome of the criticism of the Italian Renaissance. Sidney expected his correspondents to inform him as to the latest Italian books and theories, and in his own treatise he drew considerably upon the theories of Minturno, Trissino, and Castelvetro, and also from Scaliger's poetics. By these writers he controlled his views on such knotty questions as the dramatic unities, and the various canons of Aristotle, the different classes of prose and verse and most of the technical points.

But the most interesting portion of his defence by far is the more original section in which he discusses the contemporary state of poetry in England. Why, he inquires, is England, the mother of excellent minds, such a hard stepmother to poets? He admits greatness to Chaucer, and poetical beauties to *The Mirrour for Magistrates,* to Surrey, and to *The Shepheards Calender,* but he deplores the defects of the English drama, its fondness for farce and neglect of the unities; while he strongly deprecates the tendency to affectations, euphuistic and other. This state of things, he concludes, should not be; England ought to be the reverse of sterile in regard to poetry, for the English language is specially favourable to poets. Our language is equal to all demands upon it, its composite nature, its facile grammar, its richness in compound words, are so many advantages, contributing to various and melodious expression. Finally, for the purposes

of modern versifications, the English language is especially adapted. "Fie, then, on the Englishman who scorns the sacred mysteries of poetry! On all such earth-creeping minds," says Sidney, in his humorous peroration, "I ought to invoke some terrible curse such as that you be rhymed to death; I will not do that, but thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets—that while you live, you live in love and never get favour for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph."

Ben Jonson's notebook with its pedantic title of *Timber* (1641) is a somewhat promiscuous thicket of artistic and moral epigrams, raw material of thought for his *Works*, showing what a marvellous sponge he was of ideas and notions from ancient and modern literature. He invades other authors like a monarch and holds most of the writers of antiquity in solution in his spacious memory. The craze for Latinising English poetry was fairly laid to rest by this time; in other respects Jonson was usually a strong classicist, but there is a substratum of sanity, moderation, and native good sense about his opinions which separates him by a wide gulf from pedants such as Drant, Harvey, and Webbe. He respects the Italian authorities as Dryden revered Boileau, but he loves good English. "Pure and neat language I love, yet plain and customary." "Custom is the mistress of language." "The chief virtue of style is perspicuity." "Writings need sunshine." Elsewhere, as champion of the poetic office, Jonson left a noble expression of an exalted ideal, when he wrote of Poesie:

> **Attired in the majesty of art,**
> **Set high in spirit with the precious taste**
> **Of sweet philosophy. . . .**
> **O then, how proud a presence does she bear!**
> **Then is she like herself; fit to be seen**
> **Of none but grave and consecrated eyes.**



By the time he wrote *Timber* critics had begun to feel it superfluous to argue about the general tendencies of poetry. Taking all that for granted they began to study no longer the allegory but the art which underlies all creative work in literature. Jonson thus represents the maturity and the sophistication of a period now drawing to its close.[1]

[1] Of Raleigh there are Lives by Oldys (1736), Cayley, Tytler, Kingsley, Edwards (1868), Stebbing, Martin Hume, Taylor, and Rennell Rodd (1904). See also *Dict. Nat. Biog.* and Gardiner's *History;* the complete *Works* at Oxford, 1829; *A Bibliography of Raleigh*, by W. Eames, 1886. For much fuller detail as to biographers, travellers, and critics, see Seccombe and Allen's *Age of Shakespeare*, ed. 1904, Book II. For the critical writers, Haslewood's *Ancient Critical Essays* (1811-15) and G. Gregory Smith's *Elizabethan Critical Essays* (1904) should be consulted. There are good editions of Sidney's *Apologie* and Johnson's *Timber* by Cook and Schelling. On Coryat, Peacham, Overbury and some minor prose writers of the period A. W. Fox's *Book of Bachelors* may be perused with profit.

The period closed light-heartedly enough with the licentious comedy of Fletcher and with copious imitation of Melic and Anacreontic strains—the last imitation of antiquity until antique form again crops up in the Pindarics of Cowley and the Heroic Drama of Dryden. The Italian and Renaissance temper of the statesmen who had safeguarded England through the Reformation movement was none the less surely working itself out. England was now, by a strange admixture of introspection and scripture, to seek to justify the religion which its rulers had provided for it. Radical politics and biblical religion submerged the pagan and foreign, yet at the same time nationalist literary impulse, which had set in with Sidney, culminated in Shakespeare, and was disguised almost out of recognition in Milton. The serious development of our Letters had undoubtedly been deflected from its natural course by the brilliant success of the composite drama, by the undue amount of subserviency to foreign models, and by the surfeit of words for music. Narrative prose and verse, upon which it would have been natural for a later generation to build, was comparatively



undeveloped. Dazzling as Elizabethan literature is, it was in some respects strangely defective. It resembles a faerie structure built upon a narrow rock. Of foundations in the ordinary sense it possessed none. And yet, if its sphere was to be enlarged, these foundations would have, sooner or later, to be constructed. This eventually proved the task of the period from 1660 to 1780. The postponement was due to no literary dearth in the period upon which we are now entering. It was, indeed, prolific in great writers, and promised to be germinal in the highest degree. But forces more urgent than Literature were driving men to introspection and religion. A complicated and rather rapid social change, which set in about 1603, began to divert them from the drama, the very success of which had exhausted its native vitality. Literature had, in brief, to go through the straits of Puritanism. The cross conflict between Renaissance and Reformation entered upon an entirely new phase. Stress was thrown upon actual rather than upon reflected life. Bunyan, Baxter, and Clarendon became typical figures. The more intense and individualistic note which had begun to sound so interestingly in Donne and Crashaw, and Browne and Herbert, was dammed up and flowed underground for upwards of a century. But the literary study of this transition period is still in its infancy, and all such generalisations must be suspect on the score of unripeness.



BOOK III

THE COUNTER-RENAISSANCE

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CHAPTER I

FOUR GREAT PROSE WRITERS

"Fuller's language! Grant me patience, Heavens! A tithe of his beauties would be sold cheap for a whole library of our classical writers . . . and antiquarians. . . . The venerable rust and dust of the whole concern are not worth an ounce of Fuller's earth! . . . God bless thee, dear old man! may I meet with thee! which is tantamount to—may I go to Heaven!"
—COLERIDGE, *Notes on English Divines*, etc.

"To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every inch of space is a miracle,
Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs of men and women and all that concerns them,
All these to me are unspeakably perfect miracles."
—*Motto for Browne* from WHITMAN.

Robert Burton—Thomas Fuller—Sir Thomas Browne—Jeremy Taylor

ROBERT BURTON, the son of Ralph Burton, born at Lindley, in Leicestershire, on February 8th, 1577, passed from Nuneaton School to Oxford, becoming in 1599 a student at Christ Church, where for form's sake, "though he wanted not a tutor," he was placed under the tuition of Dr. John Bancroft, afterwards Bishop of Oxford. Residing at Christ Church, he drew the revenues of two livings (one in Oxford, to the parishioners of which, Wood tells us, he always gave the Sacrament in wafers), and in his famous "studie" at the "House" he died on January



25th, 1640, in the year of his grand climateric. He lies in the north aisle of the cathedral at Oxford, and his resting-place is commemorated by a coloured bust, similar in design to the Shakespeare bust at Stratford and the Hooker bust at Bishopsbourne, bearing the famous epitaph: "Paucis notus, Paucioribus Ignotus, Hic Jacet Democritus Junior, Cui vitam dedit et mortem Melancholia." He seems to have led a secluded and uneventful life as a scholar, seeking an easily found relaxation in merry tales and buffooneries. He wrote a fairly juvenile Latin play called *Philosophaster*, begun in 1606 (that is, four years before *The Alchemist*), and acted at Christ Church in 1617 (first printed 1862), dealing with the exposure of a nest of charlatans in a theme familiar to Ben Jonson. In 1621 appeared the first edition of his great work, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, What It is*, in quarto, by Democritus Junior.[1] For the general conception and form of the work Burton owes not a little, it may be supposed, to the "humourists" of a precedent generation, and to such books in particular as Thomas Walkington's *Optick Glass of Humours* (1607), Rowlands's *Democritus, or Dr. Merryman his Medicines against Melancholy Hu-*

[1] The Rylands Library at Manchester has a fine copy of the first edition "At Oxford, 1621," distinguished by the fact that the conclusion "To the Reader" is dated "from my study in Ch. Ch., Oxon, December 5th, 1620," and signed Robert Burton. It also contains the following characteristic manuscript note by George Steevens: "During a pedantic age like that in which Burton's production appeared, it must have been eminently serviceable to writers of many descriptions. Hence the unlearned might furnish themselves with appropriate scraps of Greek and Latin, whilst men of letters would find their inquiries shortened by knowing where they might look for what both ancients and moderns had advanced on the subject of human passions. I confess my inability to point out any other English author who has so largely dealt in apt and original quotations."



mours (1607), and several of Dekker's tracts. Burton himself was mined regularly until Anne's reign, when the workings were abandoned, to be rediscovered by Sterne. With the third edition of 1628, which was the second published in folio, appeared Le Blanc's remarkable frontispiece, preceded by a curious description of its contents in homely verse—verse analogous to the doggerel of the translations which adorn the text. After the dedication to Lord Berkeley come some Latin elegiacs of little interest, and some English verses called the author's "Abstract of Melancholy," of more than a little interest, for it seems practically certain that Milton had their theme in his mind and their refrain ringing in his ears when he drafted his *Penseroso*. These verses are followed by the long expository introduction, entitled "Democritus Junior to the Reader," which forms one of the most interesting and masterly portions of the book.

One of the most obvious and perhaps superficial remarks to make on the book is that it is typical of its age—that of the scholarly cento—the cento, or as Camden puts it, the "patchwork quilt" of innumerable scraps of polyglot learning, and the age that of scholars like Prynne and Cudworth, Casaubon, Keckermann, and Isaac Vossius—men of an abnormal leathery physique, who sat over their desks till their eyes grew dim, whose deliberate ideal was apparently to read and abstract and summarise practically every book that had ever been written. Swift and Bolingbroke, with Pope and Arbuthnot, at the beginning of the eighteenth century managed between them to laugh such a *modus operandi* out of court as the extremity of pedantic absurdity, and we have both gained and lost by the success of their *jeux d'esprit*. Smollett, jeering in his eighteenth-century fashion at the survival of the ancient scholastic diligence in Germany, said that the German genius lay more in the back than in the brain. But the English



scholar of Burton's day seemed to possess both back and brain.

For brain power of no ordinary kind is surely evinced in this scheme, partial though it be, of the philosophy of human life. One out of sympathy with Burton's mood may perhaps be tempted to say that a Burton might be cut out of a mind like Bacon's without much being missed. Yet Burton is much besides a scholar. If *The Anatomy* be regarded as the mere outpouring of commonplace books, with a pretext merely of unity in purpose and subject, then, maybe, it is no great thing. To be understood it must be regarded at once as the exhibition of a temperament and the discussion of a case. The case is that of the seamy side of human life and its perils. The author deliberately takes up his position of detached yet watchful isolation, in order to observe and to illustrate the human comedy: and he exhibits a new variety of vanities, combining in one book, as it were, the knowledge of Solomon and his reflections upon the futility of things known and the knowing of them. "There is nothing true, and if there is we don't know it," said Democritus; and also, "we know nothing, not even if there is anything to know." We certainly know little of Democritus, save that he was a little wearish (withered) old man, very melancholy by nature, averse to company, and given to solitariness. Burton modestly disclaimed any intention of comparing himself with the sage of Abdera, but urged that he, too, had led a silent, solitary, and sedentary life. In philosophical calibre he may have been, and probably was, inferior to the author of *Peri Euthumias;* yet Burton represents admirably well the amused tolerance of the laughing philosopher, his nihilism and his scepticism as to the possibility of attaining anything like content or happiness. "Man never is, but always to be blessed."

A curious mixture was Burton—a Christian, a Protes-



tant, and superstitious as Montaigne, as may be gathered from his digression on devils. From a profound theologian and learned microscopist of Melancholy, a waggon-load of sermons or a huge Latin tractate might have been expected. Burton gives his reasons against both, and we have what we have—a composition as heterogeneous as any English novel and containing almost every possible content except a regular intrigue or love plot. Yet we have an enormous section on Love Melancholy, in which in his own words Burton does not omit to "call a spade a spade." Thinking aloud in a slow, rumbling manner over the emptiness of life and the vanity of learning, he seeks and finds the same relief that Montaigne, Browne, and Charles Lamb found in a large measure of self-portraiture, and his erudite pessimism is at least as entertaining as Schopenhauer. His fellow collegians discerned in him a merry, facete, and juvenile old man, while his bookseller made a fortune out of his book. In lust of words and fondness for catalogues of them, he is a true fellow of Jonson, Marlowe, Rabelais, and Urquhart. Beneath all we may discover[1] peeping out pretty often the grave waggery of a man scanning human nature for foibles, and thereby keeping himself on the windy side of care.

Of the prose writers whom we are now considering Fuller had most native wit, and did the most to naturalise common sense in English everyday writing. In one respect he was the forerunner of Samuel Johnson, in the other of William Cobbett. Born at Aldwinkle, where his father was rector, in 1608, Thomas Fuller was proud to call

[1] For Burton's life the authorities are Wood's famous *Athenæ Oxonienses* and the *Reliquiæ* of Thomas Hearne. The best edition is Shilleto's, with A. H. Bullen's introduction (3 vols., 1893).* See also Ferriar's *Illustrations of Sterne;* Lamb's *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading; Blackwood*, Sept. 1861; A. W. Fox's *Book of Bachelors* (1899); and Charles Whibley's essay in *Literary Portraits* (1904).



himself a Northamptonshire and Cambridge (Queens' and Sidney Sussex) man. He took orders in 1630, and one of his first duties was to "bury" Hobson, the famous Cambridge carrier. Fuller's uncle, Bishop Davenant of Salisbury, gave him a prebend and a rectory at Broad Windsor, Dorset. There he married, and in 1639-40 brought out his *Historie of the Holie Warre,* an entertaining account of the Crusades in five books, rich in good stories and unlooked-for allusions and digressions. In 1642 he brought out his best and most popular work, the *Holy and Prophane State,* a series of character-sketches and essays, with many concrete examples—of a good wife, Monica; of a good college head, Dr. Metcalf; of a good herald, Camden; of a wise statesman, Burghley; of a good general, Gustavus Adolphus; of a good prince, Charles I.; of a witch, Joan of Arc; of a tyrant, Alva. Fuller obtained a chaplaincy in the Royalist army, and while rambling through the country collected materials for his *Worthies of England.* He would sit, it is said, patiently for hours listening to the prattle of old women in order to obtain snatches of local history or time-honoured tradition. In 1648 he obtained a curacy at Waltham Abbey, and while there wrote his buoyant *Pisgah Sight of Palestine* (1650), the topography of which was taken *in toto* from Bochartus in his *Holy Geography.* "Let my candle go out in a stink when I refuse to confess from where I have lighted it." Next year he edited and partly wrote a racy biographical Thesaurus of Protestant divines known as *Abel Redivivus.* He managed to get through the ordeal of the "triers" (or Board of Examiners who tested the "sufficiency" of divines) with the help of a "shove" from Cromwell's chaplain, John Howe, and was once more a lecturer in the City of London, where in 1655-6 he brought out his folio *Church History of Britain.* The learned Peter Heylyn regarded



Fuller, if not as a time-server, as a far too placable Churchman, and attacked his *History* as a rhapsody, full of impertinences, errors, and scraps of trencher jests. Fuller replied with a gentleness and moderation which eventually softened the heart of his critic and converted him into a trusty friend. In 1658 Fuller was made rector of Cranford, in Middlesex; at the Restoration he was reinstated to all his honours and emoluments, was made a D.D., and was well within sight of a bishopric when he was cut off by fever, at the age of fifty-four, in August, 1661.

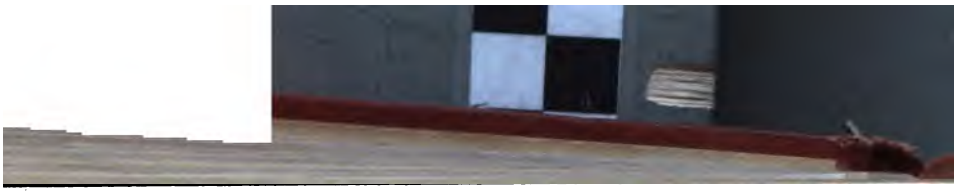
Fuller's last great book, and one of the most characteristic, *The History of the Worthies of England,* was published posthumously by his son in 1662. Its "endeavour" was to record the natural resources and most eminent worthies of each county in order. But of all biographical dictionaries it is certainly the most rambling, and also the most facetious, Fuller's peculiar humour finding scope in quaint anecdotes about all the notorieties of his day. Alike in his references to public calamities and his converse with private individuals, Fuller was utterly unable to repress this overmastering tendency to jocularity. It ought at any rate to be true that he once caught a tartar in a certain Mr. Sparrowhawk, of whom he asked what was the difference between an owl and a sparrowhawk. The reply was that an owl was fuller in the head and fuller in the face, and fuller all over.

The combination in Fuller of wit and learning, erudite fancy, and the humblest gossip made him the darling of Coleridge and Charles Lamb. He had been one of the most popular writers of his time, and one of the first who made writing pay. The eighteenth century wits were prone to look down upon him as a buffoon; but in reality he is neither coarse, vulgar, nor irreverent. He excels nearly all his contemporaries not only in clearness of style, but also in a gentle and humorous kindliness which sometimes becomes delicately beautiful. It cannot be



denied that Fuller is read far less than his present reputation as "an appetising bundle of contradictions" would seem to warrant. This is partly due to the fatigue felt by many at the frequency of his jokes and his maxims. But as a model both of prose style and of temper he deserves to be read far more than he is.

Sir Thomas Browne was born in Cheapside, London, on October 19th, 1605. His father was a London mercer of a good Cheshire family; but he died when Thomas was a child, and his mother married Sir Thomas Dutton. The boy's pecuniary interests seem to have been somewhat neglected. He was, however, sent to Winchester and to Pembroke College, Oxford, whence he took his Master's degree in 1629. Attracted by his love of physical science to the medical profession, he spent some years in travel and study at Montpellier, Padua, and Leyden, where he took his doctor's degree, and then settled down to a country practice at Shipley Hall, near Halifax. In 1637 he left Shipley, and settled finally at Norwich, where he passed forty-five years of scarcely interrupted prosperity. No man of talent, not even Herrick, stood more completely aloof from the great political struggle. From the heats of religious controversy he detached himself with a like contemplative contempt. His mind was so constituted that he held it to be essential to hold opposite views on every subject. He was thus at the same time one of the most religious, one of the most philosophic, one of the most sceptical, and one of the most credulous of men. His habitual mood is determined by an attraction towards the two opposite poles of humour and mysticism. In his great book, the *Religio Medici*, Browne indulges in some disparaging remarks upon marriage. "The whole world," he says, "was made for man; but the twelfth part of man for woman. Man is the whole world and the breath of God, woman the rib and the crooked part of man." He wishes, after Montaigne, that we might grow like trees, and



so avoid this foolish business of matrimony. Shortly afterwards he married a lady of whom it is said that she was so perfect that they seemed to come together by a kind of natural magnetism, had ten children, and lived very happily ever afterwards. When Charles II. visited the capital of East Anglia in 1671, Norwich was afflicted with a shy mayor, a bird almost as rare as the phœnix, about whom the author of *Vulgar Errors* speculated so freely. And so the honour of knighthood devolved upon Dr. Thomas Browne. In addition to the *Religio Medici*, written about 1635-6, but not printed until 1642, the two famous works published by Browne were *Pseudo-doxia Epidemica*, better known by its English title of *Vulgar Errors*, 1646; *Urne-Buriall* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, published together 1658. The busy, prosperous provincial doctor, whose whole life was "wrapt in a pure flame and ecstasy of high curiosity," survived until 1682, when he met his end philosophically on his seventy-seventh birthday, nearly a quarter of a century after the completion of his literary work.

Browne's earliest work, the *Religio Medici*, is a sort of confession of faith, revealing a deep insight into the mysteries of the spiritual life. In this he by no means confines himself to theological matters, but takes his reader into his confidence upon a host of questions as abstruse as those debated by the schoolmen,[1] intermingled with curious

[1] Thus he discusses whether after Lazarus was raised from the dead his heir would be justified legally in detaining his inheritance. Other topics are: Does goat's blood dissolve diamonds? Do Jews stink? Why are negroes black? What to say after sneezing. Should Adam be represented with a navel, or no? See Stephen's *Hours in a Library;* Symonds's introduction to *Religio Medici* (Camelot Classics); *Sir T. Browne*, by Edmund Gosse (English Men of Letters, 1905). A good text is furnished in Charles Sayle's edition of 1904. The classic editors are Simon Wilkin and W. A. Greenhill; while of *Urne-Buriall* the best edition is that of Sir John Evans (1893).



passages of self-laudation in which he enlarges upon his charity, tolerance, and perfect freedom from both meanness and pride. On such subjects, with a seasoning of Talmudic conceits and metaphysical subtleties, he pours himself out with all the artless and undisguised volubility of Montaigne. In Browne, however, there is much more of the poet; he is perhaps the most poetic Englishman that has ever habitually written prose. His thought and expression seem fused into one, and there is a sense of mystery, humour, and incommunicable charm about all that he writes which will always confirm fond readers in the belief that *Religio Medici* (with its "beautiful obliquities") is the most fascinating book ever written.

Browne, perhaps, attained his highest distinction as a stylist in his grave meditation to which he gave the name *Hydriotaphia,* a word of his own composition. The discourse originated with the discovery in 1647 of forty or fifty old urns containing burnt bones in a field at Old Walsingham, in Norfolk. The five chapters on urn-burial are the least discursive of Browne's writings. In them he takes up his abode in the charnel-house, and finds himself unexpectedly at home. We can imagine nothing graver. The rhythm has the solemnity of the passing bell; almost every word is a sepulchre; the very ornaments are flowers of mortality. But the dignity of this strange dead-march of funeral emblems is ever on the increase, and at the close of the fifth chapter the author rises to the occasion with a sombre impressiveness and a dirge-like intonation which will long resist the opium of time. It is one of the finest examples we have of Gothic prose, full of dark corners and grotesque finials, but greatly and profoundly imaginative in the highest sense of the word. Lamb compares it to a deep abyss at the bottom of which lie hidden pearls and rich treasure.

Browne's style is too peculiar and idiomatic ever to be



widely popular; but he is, with Milton and Jeremy Taylor, one of the greatest masters of tranquilly elaborated and polyphonic English prose. Like the style of the pedant satirised in *Hudibras,* that of Browne was English cut on Greek and Latin. Master of six languages, he was for ever mingling his compounds and trying new experiments with derivatives. Many of these experiments, now completely "incrassated" by time, exercised a morbid influence upon the polysyllabic periods of Dr. Johnson. A great admirer, Coleridge, admitted that his style was often hyper-Latinistic. He spoke, however, with enthusiasm on Browne's originality in conception. "Rich in various knowledge and magnificent in his style, he is a quiet and sublime enthusiast with a strong tinge of the fantast: the humorist constantly mingling with and flashing across the philosopher, as the darting colours in shot silk play upon the main dye." The impress of his thought and manner have been strong upon such writers as Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, Carlyle, Emerson, and Pater; he is seen most strongly perhaps in the contemplations of De Quincey. He has never been ranked so high as by a few critics of the last quarter of a century, such as Saintsbury, Bullen, and, above all, Lowell, who calls him our most imaginative mind since Shakespeare. Taine regards him characteristically as a striking example of the Englishman's unconquerable obsession by churchyards, graves, tombstones, winding-sheets, and death's-heads.

The most famous of the young scholars who owed their advance to the patronage of Laud, and the ornatest, if not the greatest, preacher in the golden age of the English pulpit, Jeremy Taylor, was born at the Black Bear or Black Bull at Cambridge, probably in August, 1613. His father was a barber in the town, though his ancestors had enjoyed a small estate at Frampton, in Gloucestershire; and he traced his descent from the celebrated Roland Taylor, who



perished at the stake in the third year of Queen Mary. He was well grounded at the free school, and entered Caius College as a poor scholar in August, 1626. He was thus a contemporary of Milton at Cambridge, where Taylor, who was already a Fellow of his college, proceeded M. A. in 1634. He was now ordained, and, having preached for a friend at St. Paul's, the rumour of his eloquence reached Lambeth, whither he was summoned to preach before the Primate. Laud greatly admired his style, and deplored nothing but the preacher's youth; whereupon Taylor humbly begged his Grace to pardon that fault, and promised, if he lived, he would mend it. By Laud's advice Taylor now pursued his studies at All Souls', in Oxford, until in March, 1637, he was presented to the rectory of Uppingham, and soon afterwards made a chaplain to the King. In the struggles that were impending Taylor had committed himself on the losing side by his treatise on episcopacy asserted. In 1642, or thereabouts, he was ejected from his living at Uppingham, and followed the royal army in the capacity of chaplain. Of the other divines of this period it is interesting to remember that Fuller was at this very time picking up stories of English worthies in the rear of a marching column. Pearson was chaplain to the King's troops at Exeter, while Chillingworth acted as engineer at the siege of Gloucester in 1643. It was perhaps during his connection with the army that Taylor wrote the prayer which is now appended to the third chapter of his *Holy Living* commencing, "Place a guard of Angels about the person of the King." In 1644 Taylor seems to have been taken prisoner by the Parliamentary forces. He was soon released, however, and, under the patronage of Sir John Vaughan, decided to remain on in Wales and to set up a school, where he had as an assistant the learned William Nicholson, who afterwards became Bishop of Gloucester.



While in this seclusion he wrote his celebrated *Liberty of Prophesying,* showing the unreasonableness of prescribing other men's faith, and the iniquity of persecuting opinions. In this Taylor suggests the Apostles' Creed or summary of fundamental truths as a broad basis of union. In 1648 Taylor was in London, and was permitted to pay a last visit to the King. Charles, in token of his regard, is said to have given him his watch and a few pearls and rubies which had adorned the ebony case in which he kept his Bible. Long after that farewell, in a letter to John Evelyn, Taylor spoke with affectionate reverence of the departed saint. He returned to his seclusion at Golden Grove, in Carmarthen, in the neighbourhood of Grongar Hill, afterwards celebrated by Dyer, where he was continually cheered by the friendship of the Earl of Carbery, in whose family he spent many happy hours, and after whose seat of Golden Grove he called the Manual of Devotion, at one time almost without a rival in popularity, which goes by that name.

The year 1650 saw Taylor's famous *Holy Living,* completed in 1651 by *Holy Dying,* the Allegro and Penseroso of Christian ethics and Anglican devotion. Their apposite titles and the euphony of their author's name have served to embalm these little works in the popular mind. Far inferior in originality as they doubtless are to the works of Burton, Fuller, or Browne, they have exercised a continuous influence on such devout persons as Wesley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, and have found a champion in the anything but sentimental mind of the author of *Horæ Sabbaticæ.* To prose anthologists the musings and reveries of this prose poet, with his Virgilian ornaments, composite similes, and other flowers of speech, will always remain dear, while Taylor himself will survive as the most flowery and "honey-flowing" of divines and pietists—theologian we can scarcely call him. Standing between two tides, the



tide of words and the tide of Puritanism, both of which came near to overwhelm him, Taylor (with his old patron Sanderson) was almost alone among the mighty men of old who survived the flood. His heart was gladdened by the Restoration, and the dedication of his great work of casuistry, *Ductor Dubitantium,* to Charles II. secured a mitre for him in the Irish Establishment. No better man, unless it were Ken, was so elevated by the later Stuarts. Bishop Jeremy Taylor died at Lisburn, and was buried under the communion-table at Dromore in August, 1667. It must be admitted that Jeremy makes monotonous reading. He writes with a peacock's feather, and every movement, however slight, not only of his pen, but also of his mind, is attended by flourishes.[1]

[1] The standard edition of Taylor is Bishop Heber's (15 vols., 1822, revised by Eden, 1854). See also Coleridge's *Literary Remains,* Dowden's *Puritan and Anglican* (1901), Willmott's *Jeremy Taylor, his Predecessors, Contemporaries, and Successors* (1846), and Edmund Gosse's monograph in English Men of Letters (1904). Fuller's chief works were reprinted between 1831 and 1841, and his Sermons in 1891. There are *Memorial,* of his life by Arthur T. Russell (Pickering, 1844), a fuller Life by John Eglinton Bailey in 1874, and a sketch of his *Life and Genius,* with "Fulleriana," by Henry Rogers (1856). See also Basil Montagu's *Selections from the Works of Taylor, Latimer, Hall, Milton, Barrow, South, Browne, Fuller, and Bacon,** first published in 1805.

A much greater casuist than Jeremy Taylor was Robert Sanderson (1587—1663), a luminary of Lincoln College, and afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, who enjoys the greater honour of being enshrined with Donne and Herbert and Hooker in Walton's never-to-be-forgotten Lives. His *Nine Cases of Conscience Resolved* (1678) is a book of great intellectual vigour. His *Sermons,* too, are notable for their clear reasoning. Charles I. was wont to say that he might take his ears to other divines, but for his conscience he would always take that to Dr. Sanderson. Unfortunately, upon his premature death on January 30th, 1649, the King's consicence fell into very inferior



hands. The very day after his execution appeared a little book called *Eikon Basilike: the Portraicture of His Sacred Majestie in his Solitudes and Sufferings.*" It is a volume of reflections written in the first person, apparently by Charles himself, dealing with the vicissitudes of the reign from Strafford's death down to the threshold of his own, interspersed with prayers—just such a book as the King might have written at Carisbrooke and after. As a manifesto of monarchy *in extremis* it was a most successful venture, fifty editions being sold within fifteen months. As a genuine expression of the conscience of the King it appeals strongly to the historical sensibilities. If it is not by Charles, it is worse than nothing, for it is one of the cleverest, most audacious, and most cynical forgeries known. It was not seriously suspected at the time, even by Milton, who answered it. But after the Restoration the authorship was called in question and, before Junius, it was the reigning puzzle of literary history. The external testimony is so conflicting as to be almost worthless; but internal evidence up to the present runs rather strongly against the authorship (or, at any rate, the exclusive authorship) of Charles, so confirming the claim made by John Gauden (1605—1662), a very willow-pattern divine and casuist, who certainly wrote nothing else so skilful, but who was very suspiciously raised to the see first of Exeter and then of Worcester by Charles II. and Clarendon, presumably for some secret service. The problem, however, is not yet by any means completely solved. Our own opinion is that it was written by Charles with the aid of certain divines, edited by Gauden, and named by Jeremy Taylor.



CHAPTER II

JACOBEAN AND CAROLINE POETS

1. Donne and Drummond

"Donne, nature à la fois ailée et grossière, ange au pied fourchu, vers rocailleux, de l'immoralité simiesque de Sterne. . . . Mais il a le don, ce qu'aucun travail, aucune imitation des bons modèles ne saurait fournir; partout où il va, quoiqu'il écrive, quelque boue qu'il remue, et jusque dans son hideux, ironique et malpropre *Progress of the Soul*, il est poète."

—Jusserand.

The actuality, the intensity, and the individuality of Donne represent a new note in English poetry. Elizabethan love poetry is rarely personal. Ideal and graceful though it commonly is, it is at the same time decidedly mannered, full of affectation and imitation, and, as a result, but too often either patently false, or conventional and cold. Donne may be brutal or ugly, but he is not cold, still less conventional. Fantastic to excess as he often is, he writes of his own experience. He takes us into his intimacy and runs through mood after mood. He probes unsparingly even into the arcana of passion.

The descendant on both sides of Catholics who had remained staunch through the religious troubles of Edward's reign, John Donne was born in the neighbourhood of Bread Street, London, in 1573. His father, a prosperous ironmonger, died two years after his birth. His maternal grandfather, no other than John Heywood, the famous writer of interludes in Henry VIII.'s reign, died in the Low Countries a few years later. In order to escape an embarrassing tender of the oath of



allegiance, Donne went up to Oxford very early, entering Hart Hall at the age of eleven. He was already, however, extremely precocious, and is said while there to have commenced a friendship with a lad much older than himself, the famous letter-writer and diplomatist of later years, Sir Henry Wotton. In May, 1592, he entered Lincoln's Inn, and two years later came into his considerable fortune. In the previous year he seems to have abandoned his Catholic convictions and embraced the Anglican Communion.

At the age of twenty-three Donne sailed in the famous expedition with Essex to Cadiz. In the following year he made the Island voyage, and transmitted to his friend Christopher Brooke those two poems, *The Storm* and *The Calm*. He returned from his travels finally in 1598, with a good knowledge of Spanish and Italian, to become secretary to the Lord Keeper. His curiosity seems to have been equally divided for a time between women and books,[1] and it was only very gradually that his sensuality worked itself out, and that his intellect acquired the mastery. All this time he was writing verses at intervals, and he committed a part of himself and of his experience to his poetry in a manner quite unique among the Elizabethan poets; he must have felt keenly the incompatibility between its intellectual and rather brutal sensuality and the iterated prettiness of those verses which his friends contributed with so

[1] The fashion of trying to compete in Elizabethan English with the satirical moods of "angry Juvenal" or "crabbed Persius" set in among metropolitan wits between 1593 and 1599, when the practice of printing promiscuous libels was suppressed by a peremptory rescript of Archbishop Whitgift and a great conflagration of existing "satires" by Marston, Weever, Hall, Guilpin, Goddard, and others. It was to this scabrous style of writing that the precocious and independent mind of Donne was first directed in 1593. His *Satires*, school exercises for the most part, cleverly modelled on classic patterns, appeared forty years later.



much facility to the charming anthologies of that day. In his new series of poems following the satires, the lyrical *Songs*, Donne reveals the preoccupations of the idle and full-blooded, yet highly intellectual male, in a way that hardly any other poet has done—at least before the days of De Musset.

After a clandestine and not very creditable courtship he was privately married in December, 1601. The marriage, as it turned out, could neither be concealed nor annulled, and at the furious father's instance Donne was reluctantly dismissed from the post of secretary to the Lord Keeper Egerton and sent to the Fleet Prison. The father-in-law's wrath and persecution proved only transitory, but Donne was not reinstated in his secretaryship, and had for years to come no adequate means of support for his wife and growing family. Donne's private resources had greatly diminished; and for five or six years, first at Camberwell, then at Mitcham, his poverty seems to have involved him in something approaching distress. In 1608, however, his wife's father had sufficiently relented to allow her dowry to be paid, and Donne was henceforth in a position to assume the uniform of a court flatterer and pamphleteer, a rôle for which the extraordinary subtlety and pliancy of his mind, his remarkable sensibility, and the anxieties he had undergone, alike fitted him. The *Pseudo-Martyr*, which he published in 1610, and which was constructed to minimise the wrongs of the recusants and to deprecate their claim to a fair hearing, was probably merely one of a series of controversial writings undertaken with a view of bolstering up the Government, and written in the name of several divines who were bent upon establishing their claims for a substantial reward in the Church.

Donne is said to have afforded much gratification to James by his treatment of one of these subjects in debate; the King told him frankly that he must preach for his



preferment. Donne consented, and took orders early in 1616; he was deeply skilled in all the arts of the sycophant, and it was somewhat of a plunge to exchange the certainty of private patronage for such an unstable assurance as that of court favour. But the step was more than justified; James was immensely impressed by Donne's preaching, in which he found the compound of learning, logic, and scholastic casuistry entirely to his taste. Such sense and non-sense were alike congenial to James, who strained his influence to the utmost to extort the unwilling degree of D.D. from Cambridge University for the new preacher, and soon afterwards appointed him royal chaplain, and procured him a readership in Lincoln's Inn. The intellectual side of religious controversy appealed strongly to Donne, and he extended himself in a series of sermons of inordinate length, intricacy, and scholastic elaboration. The strain of this novel kind of labour racked his excitable nerves to the furthest point of tension, and his fame as a preacher seemed to be gained at the expense of what remained of his physical buoyancy. This attenuation of fibre is reflected very faithfully in the overwrought character of his writing at this period, both in his sermons and his letters. But his physical health was fortunately repaired by a leisurely journey through Central Europe in 1619-20, as chaplain to Lord Doncaster on his diplomatic mission to the Emperor. On his return from this, Donne's subserviency to the most powerful influence of the court was suitably rewarded, and he was made Dean of St. Paul's (November, 1621). He was at last in a position to manifest that dignity and generosity of which he had always had the strongest artistic appreciation. His wife had now been dead four years, and Donne was able to devote an undivided attention to the worthy fulfilment of his spiritual duties; as in the case of Becket, the worldliness of his early career became obliterated, and the ecclesiastic was by way of being



sublimed into the saint. At the same time the frequent illness to which he was exposed seems to have sharpened his already extraordinary introspective faculties, and the combination of this with Donne's amazing talent for the refinements of theology renders the transformation which the cynical sensualist and the calculating courtier seems genuinely to have undergone, one of the most curious of psychological problems. In his late years he was surrounded by admirers who, like Izaak Walton, marvelled at a sanctity so complete and so unassuming. Charles I. was numbered among his admirers, and fully intended to have made him a bishop, but by 1630 symptoms of a fatal disease began to declare themselves. His last great sermon in St. Paul's was delivered at Easter, 1630; a year later than this he wrote one of the most original of all his strikingly individual poems, commencing:

Since I am coming to that holy room,
Where with Thy choir of saints, for evermore
I shall be made Thy music, as I come
I tune my instrument here at the door,
And, what I must do then, think here before.

About the same time he caused that extraordinary portrait of himself to be made in a winding-sheet, with the upper part of his face disclosed, standing upon a large urn, a drawing which served as a model for that quaintly imagined monument in stone which is still preserved in St. Paul's. His death-bed, like so much of his life, seems to have been carefully studied by this amazing neuropath. It was finally on March 31st that, as Walton says, his body finally melted away and vapoured into spirit. He was buried in his cathedral, in which the preservation of his monument from the fury of the Great Fire may well appear in the light of a miracle. The volatile spirit of this extraordinary, subtle, and self-seeking, yet at times sublime,



genius, had experienced little rest upon earth. After his juvenile (rarely Juvenal) satires, we have of Donne a few rather obscured and jagged but most singular lyrics, poems these of transcendental sensuality, highly intellectualised, abrupt, scandalous, ecstatic, fantastic, mocking, actual. Donne in them is a shameless realist, raising ugly and piercing screams of passion, which sound doubly raucous amid the pretty litanies of the professional and pastoral amourists who form the conventional *chorus vatum* of 1600 and thereabout. He presents in brief the graceless figure of an individualist before his time; and his strange new notes of sophistication and defiance were scarcely pardoned by contemporaries, even Ben Jonson. The younger men, of course, worshipped him, and Carew wrote of him as a king who

> ruled as he thought fit
> The universal monarchy of wit.

Walton, in his *Life,* characteristically tried to bury the outspoken lyrics, and expresses a devout hope that they have been forgotten and forgiven amidst the crowd of verse, letters, obsequies, epigrams, elegies, and divine poems of Donne's later, more seraphic years.[1]

Donne founded no school, though he, of course, had imitators. That which was valuable in him was quite inimitable. He certainly did not found the school of religious poetry which produced Herbert, Crashaw, and

[1] With the exception of *The Anatomy of the World*, the *Elegy on Prince Henry*, and a few commendatory verses, none of Donne's poetry was *printed* before the posthumous quarto of 1633, *Poems by J. D., with Elegies on the Author's Death.* Considerable additions were made in the following issues: 1635, 1650, and 1669. There is a good modern edition in the Muses' Library (ed. Chambers, 2 vols., 1896); *Selected Poems* (Orinda Booklets V.), 1904; and the interesting *Life and Letters of John Donne* by Edmund Gosse.



Vaughan. Elizabethan poetry did not begin with Donne, nor did he give it anything permanent save his own poems, though his popularity no doubt stimulated this kind of poetic expression. As to his versification, it is hard to say whether he was the more careless or perverse. He has a fine ear, as he shows constantly, yet he is capable of verse so harsh and crabbed as to be a positive offence. He deliberately breaks up the natural sequence of accent, and trusts to his ear to restore the broken cadence by a nice balance of emphasis. No poet's cadence depends more absolutely on his meaning, and therefore it is indeed that his cadence is often tortured and crabbed. Yet at his best his verse has a depth of often broken music rarely equalled by more regular craftsmen.

William Drummond, born December 13th, 1585, was the eldest son of the first Laird of Hawthornden, his mother being Susannah Fowler, sister of Secretary Fowler. He was educated at the High School, Edinburgh, and at the recently founded University (M.A., 1605). Thence he visited London on his way abroad, and witnessed court spectacles at Greenwich and Gravesend in 1606, varying sight-seeing with study and reading such books as Sidney's *Arcadia,* Lyly's *Euphues,* Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso,* a few pieces by Drayton and Dekker, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labour's Lost,* and *Midsummer Night's Dream.* In 1609, after about three years' travel and law study at Bourges and Paris, an accomplished dilettante in books and pictures, Drummond was back in Scotland. In 1610 he paid another visit to London, after which nothing remained but that he should settle in Edinburgh and be called in due course to the Scottish Bar. While he was about to do so, his father, Sir John Drummond (who had received his knighthood on James's accession to the English throne) died suddenly at the age of fifty-seven; and thus the poet, at the age of twenty-four, found himself



Laird of Hawthornden, with ample means, free to choose his own course of life. What this course of life was likely to be might have been easily guessed by those who knew him. From his boyhood his disposition had been meditative and studious; abandoning all thoughts of the Law, he retired to his own house at Hawthornden, "and fell again to the studying of the Greek and Latin authors." Drummond attached himself to the school of Scottish writers who cultivated the pure new English; his uncle Fowler and Sir Thomas Hudson, the translator of Du Bartas, may have guided him in this direction; yet he was a Scot to the last, with a keen and studious fondness for Scottish history and traditions.

The death of James's eldest son, Henry, Prince of Wales, on November 6th, 1612, opened the flood-gates of the poets, both in England and Scotland; and in 1613 was published Drummond's first poem *Teares on the Death of Mæliades*, which was perhaps the most gracefully poetical of all the tributes evoked by the occasion in Great Britain. After the publication of this poem Drummond became a close friend of Sir William Alexander, and furnished him with a commendatory sonnet to his forthcoming *Doom's Day*. About this time, notwithstanding his close retirement and serious studies, he was betrothed to a young lady named Cunningham, but in 1615, after the date of the marriage had been fixed, she died.

In 1616 appeared *Poems: Amorous, Funerall, Divine, Pastorall*. This second book of Drummond's may be called a memorial of his love and sorrow, with an appendix of miscellaneous sonnets, written at various times. Much is copied from Petrarch, Tasso, Guarini, Sanazzaro, and, above all, Marino.

After an absence of fourteen years, King James resolved to revisit his native land, and on May 16th, 1617, he entered Edinburgh. Drummond, drawn from his retirement



by the whirl and excitement of the King's visit,[1] thought it his duty not to be wanting with his own particular tribute; accordingly the long and very extravagant panegyric, *Forth Feasting,* was indited as a memorial of the visit. In it James is described as "Eye of our Western World, Mars-daunting King."

By the year 1618 Drummond was known among English literary circles as a Scottish gentleman who wrote verses that were really English; Drayton seems to have been the first person to stretch out a hand of liking and recognition; and a correspondence was maintained between them. In the autumn of 1618 Drummond received the famous visit from Ben Jonson. Drummond made careful notes of the talk between them, in which the imperfect sympathy between the fastidious scholar and the free-spoken tavern wit is very clearly exposed.

In 1623, after six years of comparative dearth, appeared *Flowers of Sion, by William Drummond, of Hawthornedenne: to which is adjoyned his Cypresse Grove;* a volume of sonnets and lyric or heroic verse, entirely philosophic or religious in character. The *Cypresse Grove* is a platonic meditation upon death, rich and sonorous in style, and anticipating much that came to full fruition in Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor. His later literary work was chiefly in prose, and his epigrams and satires were mostly political, and are of no literary value. In the year 1649, the year of regicides and their commonwealth, Drummond died on December 4th, and was buried in the church of Lasswade, about two and a half miles from Hawthornden.

[1] Drummond's brother-in-law, the author of *Scot of Scotstarvet's Staggering State of Scots Statesmen,* was knighted upon the occasion, and became Sir John Scot. On Drummond, see Masson's *Drummond of Hawthornden,** 1873, a good edition of the *Poems* for the Muses' Library by W. C. Ward (2 vols., 1894); and an essay on Drummond's Library (presented in 1627 to Edinburgh University) in Whibley's *Literary Portraits.*



All Drummond's valuable work is in the two publications of 1616 and 1623; and the best of it is extremely good. As a sonnet-writer he stands easily above all his contemporaries save Shakespeare. The art of sonneteering seemed inseparable in that age from extensive borrowing, and Drummond was no exception to this rule, but he was an artist and a scholar, far removed from such light-hearted buccaneers as Lodge. Drummond is not a poet of love, or even a poet of sorrow. Though there is real melancholy in them, few would have supposed that the poems of 1616 refer to the recent and actual loss of a bride. He is at his best in his religious poems, and when in a mood of pensive and contented melancholy reflects, with conviction born of religion and the aversion from action of a natural recluse and student, on the vanity of human endeavour and worldly prizes. His religion was deeply influenced by Plato, and frequently, like Wordsworth, he uses almost pantheistic language. His God is a god of beauty and love, and he is ecstatic rather than philosophic in his contemplations. He has not the subtlety or the strange strength of Donne, but he has far more religious feeling.

2. The Caroline Lyrists: Carew, Lovelace, Herrick, Sir John Suckling

The epithet Caroline is certainly not a term of precision. Its chronological application is ambiguous, for it might apply equally well to the works of Bunyan and to those of Herrick. Nor has the short period from 1625 to 1642 any very distinctive character of its own. Yet the lyrical poets of the reign of Charles I., who ranged themselves on the Cavalier side, do form a small group to themselves to whom the convenient title of Caroline may without too much ambiguity be applied. In the light-hearted gaiety of Carew and Herrick, in the sparkling or pathetic grace of Lovelace or Suckling, in the religious



fervour of Herbert and Crashaw, we can trace an undercurrent of protest against the sombre asceticism with which the Puritans sought to eliminate joy from life, elegance from literature, and beauty from worship.

One of the vainest, most artistic, and most irresponsible of this group was Thomas Carew. Born in Kent, either in 1594 or 1595, one of the younger sons of an injudicious and irascible Master in Chancery, Sir Matthew Carew, Thomas graduated from Merton College, Oxford, in 1611, when he was entered at the Middle Temple. Showing little aptitude for the law, he was packed off in 1612 to join the household of the English Ambassador at Venice, Sir Dudley Carleton. Carleton retained his services as secretary when he was transferred to The Hague in 1616. But Carleton had to get rid of him in the same year owing to the licence which he allowed himself in his criticism of the Ambassador and his lady. Carew then spent nearly three years in the unsuccessful quest for employment. He laboured under the imputation of being a backbiter, and was reproached by his father for his dissolute mode of life (some naughtiness is certainly reflected in such a poem as *The Rapture*). In 1619, however, he went in the train of Lord Herbert of Cherbury to France. Henceforth our knowledge of his career is fragmentary. But in 1628 we know that he was appointed a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, and a year or so later Sewer in Ordinary (that is, sewer and taster) to his Majesty. He was selected to write the gorgeous masque called *Cœlum Brittanicum* given at the Banqueting House on Shrove Tuesday, 1633. And he seems to have led a merry life at the court among the chief wits of that age until his premature death in 1639. Carew is to-day remembered almost exclusively by five or six choice lyrics.[1] None of these exceed twenty lines of

[1] The early editions of Carew's *Poems* are dated 1640, 1642, 1651, and 1671. An excellent edition was done for the Muses' Library by A. Vian, 1899.



verse, and no anthology can be considered complete without two or three of them. They include: "Go, thou gentle whispering wind"; "Ask me no more"; "In Celia's face a question did arise, Which were more beautiful, her lips or eyes"; "Give me more love or more disdain"; "Kiss, lovely, Celia, and be kind"; "You that will a wonder know"; and "He that loves a rosy cheek, or a coral lip admires." His epitaph on Donne has the fine couplet:

> **Here lies a king that ruled as he thought fit,**
> **The universal monarchy of wit.**

To the same college of wits as Carew, with the same conventions, the same ideals, and the same standards, belonged the Cavalier poet, Richard Lovelace. Grandson of one of Queen Elizabeth's knights and son of one of James's, Sir William Lovelace, who was killed in 1628, after brave service under Sir Horace Vere in the Low Countries, the poet Richard Lovelace was born at Woolwich in 1618. He was taught at the Charterhouse, and began writing poetry while he was at Gloucester Hall, Oxford, during 1635-6. He wrote a comedy, *The Scholar,* and a tragedy called *The Soldier.* He was one of the bold squires of Kent who, in April, 1642, at Maidstone Assizes, resolved to petition the House of Commons praying that the King might be restored to his rights. For his temerity in delivering this petition he was, on April 30, committed to the Gate House at Westminster. There, during a seven weeks' imprisonment, he wrote that celebrated song called "Stone walls do not a prison make." While in London Lovelace consorted with the chief musicians, poets, and painters of the day. He was well known to Lely, the Cottons, and Andrew Marvell, and he may have been the addressee of Suckling's famous "I tell thee, Dick, where I have been." During 1646-8 he was once more in the King's service, and he ran through his money in attempts to serve his



sovereign. Returning to England in 1648, and once more imprisoned, he beguiled his confinement by framing for the press his *Lucasta, Epodes, Odes, Sonnets, Songs.* Lovelace was released from prison by warrant in December, 1649, but he was a ruined man. Alms were conveyed to him from Charles Cotton and others, but he sank and died in 1658 in a mean lodging in Gunpowder Alley, between Shoe Lane and Fetter Lane, close to the spot where, a little more than a hundred years later, Chatterton was given a pauper's funeral. He was buried at the west end of St. Bride's, one of the churches burned in the fire of 1666.

Lovelace's connection with St. Bride's suggested to Richardson the name of the hero of *Clarissa,* and thus, by an ironical destiny, "Lovelace" passed through the agency of *Clarissa* into common use in the eighteenth century as a synonym for a libertine. Though supplanted in England by the older Lothario from Rowe's *Fair Penitent,* it still survives in France. Lovelace's immortality rests upon two short lyrics in *Lucasta,* "Tell me not (sweet) I am unkind," and *To Althea from Prison,* containing the famous couplet, "Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage." In the whole garden of Caroline lyric poetry these are perhaps (if we except a blossom or two of Wither's, such as "Shall I, wasting in despair?") the most perfect flowers. It cannot be denied that Lovelace is both imitative and unequal; his thought is tortuous and his expression often careless. There is a spirit of nobleness in his best verses, as charming to every reader as the gallantry and heroism of his life; but he is at other times, especially in the *Posthume Poems* (1659), frigid, conceited, and not a little obscure. His popularity is shown in the numberless imitations; and, yet, where else among contemporary lyrists shall we attain to the happy valiancy of that noble couplet:

> **I could not love thee, dear, so much**
> **Lov'd I not honour more?**



Robert, son of Nicholas Herrick,[1] a goldsmith, of Wood Street, Cheapside, was born in London, and baptised at St. Vedast's, Foster Lane, on August 24th, 1591. In the following year Herrick's father committed suicide by the novel method of jumping out of an upper window, leaving a good estate in trust for his children. At sixteen Robert (after Westminster) was apprenticed to his uncle and guardian, Sir William Herrick, a favourite goldsmith and banker of James I. But in 1614 he abandoned the business, and entered St. John's College, Cambridge. After taking his bachelor's degree in 1617, he settled in London, cultivated the society of wits and courtiers, took the time of day from Ben Jonson, passed round in manuscript the lightest of light lyrics, and was welcome wherever songs and glees were held in honour. He may have had a small post in the chapel at Whitehall: at any rate he took orders, wrote a *Farewell to Sack,* and in September, 1629, was presented to the vicarage of Dean Prior, near Totnes, in Devonshire.

Some of the bantlings of his wit first saw the light in a miscellany of 1640, called *Wit's Recreations.* A volume of religious rhymes containing one or two gems, such as his thanksgiving to God for his house, and much more doggerel, appeared in 1647 under the title of *Noble Numbers; or, Pious Pieces.* A corrective to this was found, and Herrick's true talent revealed in his *Hesperides,* or works both

[1] Variously spelt, as Allingham's allusion hints:—

"Hayrick some do spell thy name,
And thy verse approves the same;
For 'tis like fresh-scented hay
With country lasses in't at play."

Herrick is excluded from Southey's *Select Works of the British Poets from Chaucer to Jonson* (1831), which contains the best poems of Greville, Davies, Daniel, Donne, Carew, the Fletchers, Habington, Wither, Browne, Davenant, Lovelace, and the whole of Drayton's *Polyolbion.*



humane and divine, of 1648. Before this appeared Herrick had been tumbled out of his sequestered parish by the storms of the civil war, and had returned gaily to London, where he seems to have dropped his clerical style and habit, called himself Robert Herrick, Esquire, and renewed the acquaintance of the tempestuous petticoats of his youth. To this period may possibly be referred his *Welcome to Sack*. In the Caroline College of Wit-Crackers Herrick stands alone, in so much as he rhymed not as an elegant accomplishment, but by vocation. He versified as instinctively as Wordsworth. The joy of life was strong within him, and found expression in a continual stream of fleurettes, posies, and mottoes. Now and again he soars for a more sustained flight with an exquisite lyrical movement. But it is always essentially a butterfly flight. The poise and colour and sunshine of it are perfect; but of the music which comes from the emotion felt, or mystery shadowed, there is practically none. Herrick speaks of himself as singing of "brooks and blossoms, birds and bowers," of April, May, of June and July flowers:

> I sing of may-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
> Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal cakes.

It is true he does rhyme on these subjects, and on many others besides under earth and heaven; but he is really poetical on the smallest possible number of themes, and those the common property of all tuners of the elegant lyre. Let us drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die. Love's a stuff will not endure. Where are the snows of yester year? Herrick can touch all these subjects with enchanting delicacy and with some tenderness. He imitates freely from Horace, Catullus, Martial, Marot, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Marlowe, Ben Jonson. He anticipates Prior, Praed, Moore, and Fitzgerald. He is, perhaps, essentially a writer of *vers de société* before his time. Before, that is to say, either the



material or the instrument was quite ripe for such treatment. He is pagan, malicious, scholarly, Anacreontic, and, above all, frivolous, as every accomplished occasional writer should be, but he is also inveterately quaint. His poems are as nice as kisses—kisses that are never more than playful. The proportion of Herrick's verses that is of really high quality is extremely small, but a few of his songs have come to be almost everywhere known. These indispensable little poems combine an amatory playfulness and quaintness with a lyrical daintiness and melody so enchanting as fully to justify the resuscitation of Herrick by the nineteenth century as a poet ranking with Wither, Crashaw, Collins, and Hood; but not to justify the excessive laudation of Herrick as second, third, or even first of English lyrists, into which some enthusiasts have been betrayed.[1]

After fourteen more years of London life the versatile Herrick once more resumed a surplice. Having witnessed the festivities of the joyous Restoration, a favouring gale wafted him back to his old moorings at Dean Prior in August, 1662, and there he was buried on October 15, 1674.

Sir John Suckling was born at his father's house in the parish of Twickenham in January, 1609. His grandfather

[1] There is a perfect rage to-day for reprinting, and we suppose re-purchasing (more problematically for re-perusing) the poets of the seventeenth century. Among the ranks of the reprinted Herrick is easily first favourite. Witness recent editions in the Golden Treasury Series (F. T. Palgrave), Aldine and Canterbury Poets, Muses' and Red Letter Libraries, Century, World, and Temple Classics, Caxton and Newnes Reprints, and many others. His monument at Dean Prior went up in 1857. See *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1904. He is represented by seven pieces in *The Golden Treasury*, and no less than twenty in the *Lyra Elegantiarum*. Lovelace still awaits an edition by Mr. Thorn Drury. For his life see *Dict. Nat. Biog.*



was mayor, and his uncle dean, of Norwich. His father sat in Parliament for Reigate, was knighted at Theobalds in 1616, and held a lucrative post in the royal household at the same time as Carew. After a promenade in polite learning at Cambridge (Trinity) he passed to Gray's Inn, and so to Paris and Italy. In 1632 he returned to London, after a term of service under the great captain of that age, Gustavus Adolphus, and plunged into all the prodigalities of the court. In feather-headedness, and also, it must be added, in licence, he seems to have been a true prototype of Rochester and Buckingham. At one time he was all for gaming, and won or lost thousands at cribbage—a game he is said to have invented—or ninepins; at another time the black eyes of the ladies attracted him, and he made a magnificent entertainment in London, at which he presented all the young beauties with silk stockings and garters. Cudgelled into a handful by an irate rival, he turned philosopher, travelled about with a cartload of books, discussed learned themes with Falkland and Boyle, and championed Shakespeare against the classics. In January, 1639, he raised a troop of horse, magnificently accoutred, for the Scots campaign. But his scarlet and gold contingent fled, like the rest of the army, without striking a blow; and Suckling's own coach was captured by Leslie full of magnificent clothes.

Suckling remained a staunch royalist to the end, and Charles placed much reliance upon him, though he was scarcely a man of the type that one would repose great trust in at an extremity. He rallied to the Queen in the same spirit as the French officers rallied round Marie Antoinette in July, 1789. But the "army plot" failed ignominiously, and Suckling fled in May, 1641, to Paris. The deplorable end of the rich, gay, and witty, but spendthrift, knight is thus related by Aubrey:

"Anno (1641) he went to France, where, after some



time being come to the bottome of his fund that was left, reflecting on the miserable and despicable condition he should be reduced to, having nothing left to maintain him, he (having a convenience for that purpose lyeing at an apothecarie's house in Paris) tooke poyson, which killed him miserably with vomiting. He was buryed in the Protestants' churchyard. This was (to the best of my remembrance) 1646." Aubrey's recollection of the year of his death is unquestionably wrong, since an elegy upon the "incomparable" Suckling appeared in 1642; and it is probable that the poet met his death in the early summer of that year.

In *The Session of the Poets* Suckling hits off, with an audacity which we could ill spare, the foibles of all the most celebrated wits among his contemporaries, conspicuously Ben Jonson, Tom Carew, Will Davenant, Tobie Matthew, and the author himself. The idea was imitated in the next generation by Rochester (*Trial for the Bayes*) and Sheffield (*Election of a Poet Laureate*); subsequently by Byron, Leigh Hunt, and many others. The famous *Ballad upon a Wedding*, commencing, "I tell thee, Dick, where I have been," addressed, says tradition, to Dick Lovelace, and written upon the marriage of Roger Boyle to Lady Margaret Howard at Northumberland House, Charing Cross, has already seen the light in *Wittes Recreations* of 1640. Hallam remarks sagely of Suckling that though deficient in imagination, he left former song writers far behind in gaiety and ease. It is not equally clear, he adds, that he has ever been surpassed since. Of wits about town he was at least the *facile princeps* of his day:

> In music made of morning's merriest heart.

If we admit that Suckling did not excel in imagination, it must be conceded that he had the gift of fancy in the most superlative degree. To no feebler endowment can we



attribute the delight which the sportive and frolicsome humour of the "ballad" never fails to produce. The artful simplicity of its stanzas reaches its climax in the figure of the bride dancing, when:—

> Her feet beneath her petticoat,
> Like little mice, stole in and out.

But the distribution of excellence through every part of this remarkable *jeu d'esprit* is such that we can scarce equal it out of *John Gilpin*. The wit, *insouciance*, and airy levity of minor lyrics, such as:—

> 'Tis now, since I sat down before
> That foolish fort, a heart
> (Time strangely spent!) a year or more;
> And still I did my part;

or—

> Out upon it, I have loved
> Three whole days together;

and—

> I prithee, send me back my heart
> Since I cannot have thine,

can hardly be approached in occasional poetry until we come on to Prior and Praed. As a playwright "natural easy Suckling," as Millamant called him, was rather dull, and his dramas are precious only inasmuch as they harbour a few poems of price, such as "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?"

What seems to have struck Suckling's contemporaries—and it is really a priceless gift—was the directness and vivacity of his diction and the airy persiflage which he substituted for the distressful yearning of the conventional Elizabethan lover. Wither's best songs are distinguished by a charming simplicity, Lovelace's by a brave and gallant spirit, Suckling's are marked by a gay and sparkling impu-



dence. This was to become the *Musa Proterva* of Sedley and Rochester.[1]

[1] The best edition of Suckling is still *Selections*, with life and critical remarks by the Rev. Alfred Suckling, 1836. An edition for the Muses' Library is in preparation by Hamilton Thomson. See *Dict. Nat. Biog.* Suckling is well represented in W. J. Linton's charming anthology, *Rare Poems of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*,* 1883.



CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS POETRY

"Thoughts too deep to be expressed,
ington, Pordage, and Traherne.
—*George Wither.*

Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan—Wither and Quarles—Habington, Pordage, and Traherne.

THERE is something the least bit unpleasant about the avowed epicureanism of parson Herrick and the outspoken contempt which he expressed for the "salvages" who were his parishioners, whether or no Kingsley's ideal be true, and it be

> **Better to have the poet's heart than brain,**
> **To feel than write; but better far than both**
> **To be on earth a poem of God's making.**

It is with a sense of wholesome contrast that we turn from the celebrator of Anthea's instep to the saintly and single-minded George Herbert. It is like passing from the atmosphere of a revel and the capping of verselets over the wine cups to the serenity of Herbert's own "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright!"

George Herbert was born at Montgomery Castle on April 3rd, 1593 (the same year as his proud biographer Izaak), being the fourth son of Sir Richard, and younger brother of Edward, famous as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, destined to become a pioneer of English deism. George had only reached his fourth year when his father died; the rest of his childhood passed "in a sweet content" under the care of a mother whose virtues he never tired of expounding; he was taught at Westminster and Trinity College, Cam-



bridge (M.A. 1616), and was distinguished both as scholar and musician. In 1619 he became Public Orator at Cambridge, and gratified James I. by the flattering terms in which he acknowledged the King's gift to Cambridge of a copy of the *Basilicon Doron*. Bishop Williams presented him to the prebend of Leighton Ecclesia; he went to live in the neighbourhood; was influenced by the saintly Nicholas Ferrar, of Little Gidding; set to work to restore the ruined church at Leighton, and finally decided to enter into sacred orders (1626), to which his mother had often persuaded him. In April, 1630, at the instance of the Earl of Pembroke, Charles I. presented Herbert to the rectory of Bemerton, between Salisbury and Wilton. There the poet passed the remainder of his life, which he devoted to the saintlike performance of the duties of his office and to the elaboration of a series of religious poems which are probably without a rival in the English language. But his strength was not equal to his self-imposed tasks. Consumption declared itself, and after an incumbency of less than three years he died on February 24th, and was buried beneath the altar of his church on March 3rd, 1633. Dying childless, he left his property to his wife Jane (Danvers) whom he married in 1629; his books to his friends, and his manuscript verses to Nicholas Ferrar.[1]

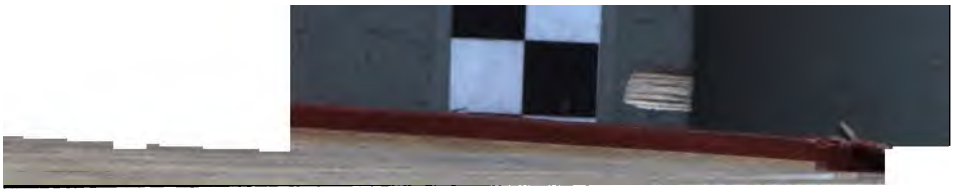
Apart from a few Latin and Greek verses, all Herbert's poetic work was published after his death. With the exception of his sonnets to his mother, eight psalm renderings given in Playford's *Psalms and Hymns* (1671) and two stray poems first collected by Dr. Grosart, it is all to be found in *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejacu-*

[1] The best *Life of George Herbert* since Walton's is that of John J. Daniell (1902). The best annotated edition is that of George Herbert Palmer (3 vols., 1905). There are many reprints, Pickering's, Nichol's, and Grosart's being among the best. See *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv., and *Times*, December 22nd, 1905.



lations, brought out by Ferrar at Cambridge in 1633. These poems, forming a Jacob's ladder of the religious emotions, were all written in strict self-communion and without the slightest regard to public scrutiny. Hence many of their peculiarities: their close-packed elliptical phrasing, their simplicity of unwrought expression often mistaken for affectation, their profound intimate feeling. He was deeply imbued by the intellectuality and ingenuity of Donne. The result is often an obscurity akin to the obscurity of Browning, an elusiveness resembling that of Emerson, a turn of phrase as far removed from the obvious and also from the superficial as a phrase of George Meredith. But the thought implicit is well worth unravelling, for under it lies the emotion of one who had been gradually drawn to the religious life and stirred by it to his inmost soul; of one whose appeal to God against the sense of sin is more intimate than that of any other religious poet, and of one who combines an intellect second only to that of Donne, with a far deeper emotional existence. Those to whom we should naturally appeal as the best judges of religious poetry, Crashaw and Vaughan, Cowper and Coleridge, have all expressed their profoundest admiration for Herbert. Charles I. in prison, Cowper in the agonies of religious dejection, both found in him the truest solace. Failing an adequate commentary, the reader must himself creep with difficulty into the heart of Herbert's meaning: the true inwardness of resignation, of prayer and communion with God, of the passionate sense of sin, of humility, and of charity, will nowhere else be so deeply and intellectually revealed to him.

Taking the risk of obscurity Herbert gains in some whole poems and in more single stanzas a power of illumination that frequently seems almost miraculous. Such power of intuition is most clearly seen perhaps, though it is clogged with a difficult and spasmodic utterance, in such poems as



Employment and *Man*. In such poems as *The Flower* and *Prayer*, with its grand finale of thought that seems almost too deep for words, the thought is linked with a mysticism approaching to ecstasy, which is uncommon in Herbert. In that wonderful poem, *The Temper*, it is combined with an elegant dignity and an intensity which is of the very centre.[1]

The juxtaposition of George Herbert with Hooker and Donne in the exquisite pages of Walton has led to his being regarded with a kindly and condescending affection involving a complete under-estimate of his poetical value. This under-estimate is based in the main upon two misconceptions—first, that Herbert is primarily the poet of a religious party representing the High Church Anglicans under the Primacy of Laud. This is a complete mistake. Herbert's poems are in their essence the ejaculations not of a Churchman but of a Christian. The second misconception is due to the likening of Herbert and his poetry to the seemly and decorous formalism of Keble. To confuse the nature of the two poets is just about as intelligent as to confuse the functions of priest and sacristan because they are both employed about the altar. Herbert is the interpreter of mysteries, Keble the beautifier of the formal and external. To recognise the message of Herbert in the music of Keble were to mistake for the chalice of the grapes of God the embroidered cloth that adorns the altar.

Among the foremost admirers of Herbert was the erratic

[1] More purely poetic in conception is *Life*, "I made a posie while the day ran by," or *Church Music*. Into the four short stanzas of *Virtue*, still more into the six stanzas of *The Quip*, Herbert contrives to condense a whole morality play. That Herbert could combine playfulness with finish, with a genuine depth of feeling in place of the essential frivolity of the courtly makers of his time, is triumphantly shown in such a poem as *Submission*. His quaint ingenious symbolism is well seen in *The Elixir*.



and ecstatic genius of Richard Crashaw, the most mystical and perhaps the most unequal of English poets. The only child of William Crashaw, a Puritan incumbent of Whitechapel, Richard was born about 1612-13, and went to Charterhouse and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, but owed the best part of his education to Nicholas Ferrar, whose Protestant nunnery was within a ride of Cambridge. Under this influence his early training in Protestant divinity gave place to a mystical and fervent devotion, which led him to refuse to take the Solemn League and Covenant and to his consequent ejection from his fellowship at Peterhouse by the Parliamentary Commissioners.

Soon after his ejection, Crashaw seceded from the Protestant Church and retired to France. His friend Cowley, who was in the French capital in 1646 as secretary to Lord Jermyn, found him in great poverty (a "meer scholar and very shiftless") at that time. Queen Henrietta was then an exile in Paris, and it is said that Cowley or Dr. Gough and Mr. Car introduced Crashaw to her, and she gave him letters of recommendation to Italy, whither he went and became secretary to Cardinal Palotta at Rome. He probably remained in Rome until 1650, when, having by his plain speech in regard to certain ecclesiastics made his position an uncomfortable one, he was transferred to the Lady Chapel of Loretto, of which Palotta made him a canon. He died of fever after but a few weeks' residence, and was buried at Loretto within the chapel in 1650. The poet Cowley laid one of his best elegies as a tribute on his grave.

His chief poems were published in 1646 (revised 1648) under a title suggested by his study of Herbert, *Steps to the Temple: Sacred Poems, with Other Delights of the Muses.* Among the secular poems indicated by the subtitle are *Wishes to his Supposed Mistress,* beginning with the unforgettable



Who ere she be,
That not impossible she,
That shall command my heart and me,

and *The Muses Duel,* a rendering of Strada's Latin fable of the poet and the nightingale, notable for what Mr. Swinburne calls "its dazzling intricacy and affluence of refinement, its choiceness and subtlety." But the flame of Crashaw's genius soars to real ecstasy only at the touch of religious emotion in the poems (collected in the volume called *Carmen Deo Nostro,* Paris, 1652) in which he addresses Jesus, the Holy Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and Santa Theresa. His poem on the Name of Jesus is an extraordinary concatenation of inspirational flashes and fantastic conceits; but the summit of Crashaw's lyrical exaltation is attained in the octosyllabic "Hymn" and the last dozen couplets of the poem on "The Flaming Heart" of Saint Teresa.[1]

Of all the concettists, from Donne and Herrick to Cowley and Vaughan, Crashaw was perhaps the most conceited. He sank deeper, and in brief momentary flights it is possible that he fluttered higher than any of his contemporaries. Plain critics have reproached him for being a wire-drawer and a hyperbolist, but the school of enthusiasm—Coleridge, Swinburne, Macdonald, and Dowden—do reverence to his raptures, and have perhaps successfully vindicated his claim to be regarded as the poets' poet. For such a distinction Crashaw undoubtedly possesses this qualification: He is "caviare to the general."

Henry Vaughan, the scion of an old Welsh family, was born at a farmhouse near Brecon in April, 1622. He

[1] The best text of Crashaw is that of A. R. Waller in the Cambridge English Classics, 1904. Of Crashaw and Vaughan alike there are recent and convenient editions in both the Muses' Library and the Little Library.



studied with his twin-brother Thomas, the alchemist, at Jesus College, Oxford. Both of the brothers suffered deprivation and imprisonment in the royal cause, though Thomas only actually bore arms for the King. About 1645 we find Henry settled as a physician in his native county, the county of the Silures, whence he always described himself as "Silurist." [1]

It was almost inevitable that Vaughan should start his poetic life as a disciple of Ben Jonson. His first-fruits as an author were accordingly *Poems, with the Tenth Satire of Juvenal Englished,* published in 1646. Other translations followed on *Olor Iscanus* (Swan of Usk), written about 1647, published without authority in 1651. Meantime a serious illness had profoundly deepened and intensified Vaughan's religious convictions, as may be seen in the devoutly mystical tone of his chief work, *Silex Scintillans* (Sparks from the Flint), *or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations,* London, 1650, re-issued with a second part in 1655. This second part contains the crown of all Vaughan's poetry, the now widely famous:

> They are all gone into the world of light!
> And I alone sit lingering here;
> Their very memory is fair and bright,
> And my sad thoughts doth clear.

Such poems as these had little interest for the age of Rochester and Burnet. Aubrey himself could not find a word to recommend the literary productions of his relative to Anthony Wood. Vaughan lived on obscurely at Skethrog until April 23rd, 1695, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot." Vaughan was forgotten effectually for fully

[1] They were born, says Aubrey, at Llansanfraid in Brecknockshire by the River Uske (Isca). Their grandmother was an Aubrey: their father, "a coxcombe and no honester than he should be—he cosened me of 50.s. once."



a century after his death until, at the close of the eighteenth century, a copy of *Silex Scintillans* fell into the hands of Wordsworth. Subsequently to this, in his notices of the English poets written in 1819, Campbell speaks of Vaughan as one of the harshest even of the inferior order of the school of conceit, though he allows him a few scattered thoughts "like wild flowers on a barren heath." The passage of another century has greatly increased Vaughan's fame, though it still reposes upon a few rare beams of transcendental beauty, emerging from a cumulus of thought, the general tone of which is dark and obscure, while in form it is often chaotic and rugged. The durability of his fame is ensured by his two poems, *Beyond the Veil* and *The World:*

> I saw eternity the other night,
> Like a great ring of pure and endless light,

and by that beautiful fragment, *The Retreat,* in which the perfected grandeur of the *Intimations of Immortality* is so distantly yet distinctly foreshadowed.[1]

[1] Two singular compilers of religious "Emblems," hymns, songs, pious aphorisms, and the like in this period were that most cavalier of Roundheads, George Wither, and that most plebeian of Royalists, Francis Quarles. As a poet, of course, Wither reaches "starry heights" far above Quarles. A natural warbler, in his darling measure, the heptasyllabic, he published delicate poetry between 1611 and 1622 (*The Shepheards Hunting, Withers Motto, Fair Virtue,* and *Fidelia,* which enshrines that famous and most exquisite song, "Shall I, wasting in despair?") and went on drivelling in verse almost down to his death in 1667, *æt.* 79. The joy and confidence and lilting elasticity of his early secular poems present a sharp contrast to the scholarly sweetness of Drummond or the subtleties and perversities of Donne. While pent in the Marshalsea Gaol in early years, Wither reverted with fond yearning to the sylvan beauties of his native Bentworth, of Alton, and the silver pool of Alresford, so that Charles Lamb says with some justice



that his prison notes are finer and fresher, if not freer, than the woodnotes of his poetical brethren. The godly Quarles was a staunch loyalist, but his poetry is opaque and partakes more of Jordan than of Helicon; it serves as letterpress to the Latin mottoes and strange Dutch emblems which constitute the *Emblemes. By Fra. Quarles* of 1635. Succeeding ages have agreed to describe these expositions as quaint; but what Horace Walpole thought subject for derision, we should only expect Charles Lamb to find delectable. The *Emblemes* are entertaining in an early edition, not otherwise. The *Poetry of Wither* is to be studied in the excellent edition of Frank Sidgwick (2 vols., 1903). The copious Quarles—dull, peaceful, prolific, a fond votary of the angle down along his slow-moving native streams of Essex—was included by Grosart in his Chertsey Worthies Library (3 vols., 1874). Three other serious poets of the age of Milton must be included in this brief mention. William Habington, a Wigornian (1605—1654), wrote a tedious panegyrical miscellany called *Castara*, 1634, in honour of his adored wife, Lucy Herbert. John Pordage (1607—1681), an astrological parson and Behmenist mystic, calling himself "Father Abraham," who survived a highly dangerous charge of Pantheism, wrote a quantity of very strange mystical verse of a theological tendency. Thirdly and lastly, the new-discovered poet, Thomas Traherne (1635—1674), who combined peculiarities of Donne and Cowley with equally contrary characteristics of the simple and saintly Herbert and the mystical and obscure Vaughan. The son of a cobbler at Hereford, Traherne was educated at Brasenose, Oxford, and is noted by the unsparing curiosity of Aubrey as having entertained a phantom apprentice in a red waistcoat in his chamber by moonlight. After publishing one or two divinity tracts, notably *Roman Forgeries*, 1673, he died at Teddington in the capacity of chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgman, and was buried October 10th, 1674. In some of his transcendental poems such as *The Salutation*, *The Choice*, *Love*, *Thoughts*, *The Estate*, written in a very irregular metre and manifestly inspired in large measure by George Herbert, Traherne occasionally hits upon expressions, ideas, and even phrases curiously premonitory of Blake and Wordsworth. He is a true poet of very limited range, and the world is indebted to Bertram Dobell for the handsome collection of his *Poetical Works* (Dobell, 1903).



CHAPTER IV

DIVINITY AND LEARNING FROM HOOKER TO SELDEN

"What went they out to see? A man clothed in purple and fine linen? No, indeed; but an obscure, harmless man; a man in poor clothes, his loins usually girt in a coarse gown, or canonical coat; of a mean stature and stooping, and yet more lowly in the thoughts of his soul: his body worn out, not with age, but study and holy mortifications; his face full of heat pimples, begot by his unactivity and sedentary life. . . . God blessed him with so blessed a bashfulness that in his younger days his pupils might easily look him out of countenance; so neither then, nor in his age did he willingly ever look any man in the face: and was of so mild and humble a nature that his poor parish-clerk and he did never talk, but with both their hats on, or both off, at the same time: and to this may be added. that though he was not purblind, yet he was short or weak-sighted; and where he fixed his eyes at the beginning of his sermon, there they continued till it was ended; and the reader has a liberty to believe that his modesty and dim sight were some of the reasons why he trusted Mrs. Churchman to choose his wife."—WALTON, *Life of Mr. Richard Hooker.*

An age of ecclesiastical controversy—Richard Hooker—*The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*—Archbishop Ussher—Sir Henry Savile—John Selden—Sir Henry Wotton—The "ever-memorable" John Hales—William Chillingworth—Francis Godwin.

As Elizabeth's reign progressed, the spread of Puritanism —that is, of distinctively Calvinistic forms of religion— indicated the approaching breakdown of the basis of compromise on which Elizabethan uniformity in religious matters rested. It was natural that one of the first symptoms should take the form of an attack upon the bishops; many of these were in the Elizabethan *régime* extremely worldly

and self-seeking men, chosen rather for their pliancy and power of "forking up" than for any spiritual or moral pre-eminence. The Puritans objected to them not only for their sponginess, but on principle as institutions savouring of Popery and as guardians of an Act of Uniformity which legalised the use of the old vestments and lent itself to catholic interpretation. Nor were the Puritans the only enemies of the bishops, upon whose wealth the poorer clergy of all shades looked askance. At court also there was a party gluttonous for more Church property. Such factors produced the Martin Marprelate controversy—a virulent paper and pamphlet war which raged from 1589 to 1593, in spite of all the threats and prohibitions of constituted authorities. But the age was one of ecclesiastical controversies, and disputes were rife between Anglican and Catholic theologians, between High and Low Church within the pale of the Establishment, between "Marians" and "Genevans," between Brownists and Presbyterians, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, and so all round the circle. Two of the most noted books of the time were thus produced by apologists for the Anglican settlement—Bishop John Jewel, (whose Latin *Apologia* for the Church of England appeared in 1564, and was Englished by the sister of Lady Burghley and mother of Lord Bacon) and the "judicious Hooker."

Richard Hooker, born in March, 1554, was a native of Exeter and a nephew of John Hooker, otherwise known as John Vowel, the foremost of Holinshed's editors when the famous *Chronicle* came to be re-edited in 1597. This uncle paid for Richard's schooling at the High School, and found a patron for the promising boy in the famous Dr. Jewel. Jewel knew Cole, President of Corpus Christi College at Oxford, where Hooker was accordingly (1568) entered as a clerk or servitor. Hooker stayed on at college as a scholar greatly respected for his Hebrew and other linguis-



tic learning until 1584, when he was married, and a year later was appointed Master of the Temple. Here began Hooker's labours in defence of the apostolic character of the English Church. Travers, a bold preacher with a popular manner, was afternoon lecturer in the Temple, and maintained in the pulpit Presbyterian views of Church government. Hooker preaching in the forenoon, the pulpit, as Fuller said, "spake pure Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon." Travers, silenced by Whitgift on the ground of insufficient ordination, continued the war in print. Hooker replied to the charge of latitudinarianism; but, unfit for the worry of controversy, begged from his patron some quiet post in the country, and in 1591 removed to the living of Boscombe, near Salisbury. Here, in peace and privacy, he investigated the general principle involved in the position of the Church of England, and organised the already begun eight books of his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,* of which the first four were published in 1594. Translated in 1595 to the better living of Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, he sent a fifth book (longer than all the rest) to press in 1597. He died at Bishopsbourne on November 2nd, and was buried November 4th, 1600. A sculptured portrait bust in the chancel of the beautiful little church stands to us for a noble type of Elizabethan divine. Books VI. and VIII. of the *Polity* were published in 1648; a seventh book appeared in 1662. Books VII. and VIII. appeared to have been edited by Gauden from notes left by Hooker. Doubts have been raised as to the genuineness of the sixth book. It does not conform with Hooker's plan; but Keble, Hooker's chief editor, had no doubt it was substantially Hooker's, though not designed as part of the *Polity.*

The objects of Hooker's work may thus be summed up. In the first book he endeavours to show the philosophical position of the Church of England, and the place of such



an institution in a universal scheme. The second book is an argument to refute the Puritanical view of the Bible as being a cyclopædia of all knowledge and all truth. The object of the third is to prove that there is no ground for the assumption that Scripture must of necessity prescribe a form of Church government. The fourth book is a defence of the Church of England ceremonies against the charge of being Popish; and the fifth contains a long and minute vindication of the Church on all the points attacked by the Puritans. The sixth book was designed to carry the war into the enemy's country, and to confute the Presbyterian theory of Church government. The seventh is an exalted vindication of Episcopalianism; and the eighth an explanation of and apology for the doctrine of the royal supremacy.

The main object of Hooker is thus to uphold the settlement made by Queen Elizabeth's Government, and known in later days as the *via media* against the attacks of the party formed by the Protestant exiles who, expelled from England under Mary, and repulsed by the Lutherans, had fallen under the sway of Knox, Calvin, and the Swiss reformers of Zurich. Hooker is in this way the literary exponent of the practical policy of Whitgift; and continually upon a knife-edge between Rome and reform, symbolism and whitewash, the Bible and the Church, tradition and logic, the dialectician's task is an almost superhuman one. To defend an elaborate compromise, the result of peculiar political conditions created by Tudor lust, despotism, and the greed of the rising official families of Russells and Cavendishes and Cęcils who fawned upon the throne, might well seem to a philosopher a task beyond human power. Undoubted it is, nevertheless, that in the liturgy of the new Church Cranmer created a monument of the power and beauty of the English language that has never been rivalled; while in his defence of the polity of the same



Church and the laws that ought to govern such polity Hooker created a prose classic ("the first in our language") which remains to this day the most representative and original example of great and high-sounding English prose.

The three greatest preachers on the Church side were Joseph Hall (1574—1656), Bishop of Norwich, the English Seneca, already celebrated for his *Characters;* John Donne (1573—1631), the poet and Dean of St. Paul's, whose poems were printed in folios dated 1640 and 1649; and Lancelot Andrewes (1555—1626), chaplain of Whitgift, and eventually Bishop of Winchester. Though a serious scholar who never left his book before noon, Andrewes was a vivacious wit, and his felicitous citations made him a great favourite in the pulpit, the star of preachers. His *Preces Privatæ,* or private devotions, constructed out of precious stones of ancient piety, became almost instantly popular. Bishop Andrewes was a noted apologist of his Church, and his example and influence were long active forces within it.

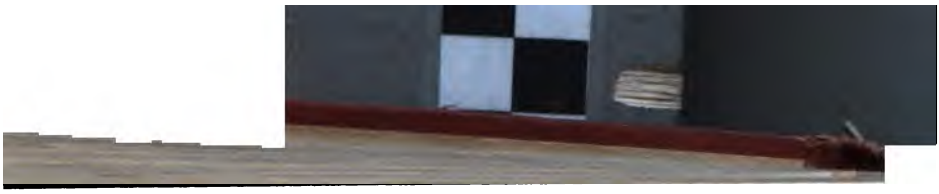
A primacy among our scholars of this period may justly be claimed for James Ussher, the celebrated Archbishop of Armagh, who was born in Dublin on January 4th, 1581. While a student at the newly founded Trinity College in Dublin, Ussher's preference was for poetry; but a chance phrase in Cicero, "nescire quid antea quam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum," revealed to him what was evidently for him the right path, of history and archæology. He came over to buy books for his college, and was soon known to Camden and the antiquaries as the most learned of all Irishmen. His reading made of him a zealous Protestant and predestinarian, and the Calvinists pointed with pride to his *De Ecclesiarum Christianarum Successione et Statu* (1612) as a worthy monument of their faith and erudition. In 1625 he was made Primate of the Irish



Church, but the rebellion drove him to Oxford. Later, by refusing to take part in the Westminster Assembly, he put the seal upon his steadfast professions of loyalty. The death of the King profoundly affected him. Cromwell treated him with indulgence, and he was respected by all parties; but he died in the shade of adversity and retirement at the Countess of Peterborough's seat at Reigate on March 21st, 1656. While at Oxford he was in a good position for advancing his great chronological work, *The Annales* (I., 1650; II., 1654), for which he is celebrated. This is a chronological digest of universal history from the creation of the world to the dispersion of the Jews in Vespasian's reign. He fixes the creation of the world at 4004 B.C.[1]

A close rival of Ussher in historical scholarship was a man of an earlier generation, Sir Henry Savile, *vir doctissimus* according to Joseph Scaliger, and generally admitted to be the most learned Englishman in profane literature at the court of Elizabeth. In 1591 he brought

[1] His great predecessor Scaliger, in his *De Emendatione Temporum*, had fixed it at 3950 B.C., adhering closely in the main to the vulgar Jewish chronology and to the authority of the Masoretic text. Scaliger was followed by Petavius, who fixed the Creation at 3984 B.C. and the Exodus from Egypt at 1531 B.C. His chronology was generally adopted by Roman Catholics. Thus Ussher was to a large extent in leading strings when he began his investigations, the scholarly repute of Scaliger and Petavius carrying with it the consensus of nearly all learned Europe. He was thought, however, to have made a brilliant and daring innovation by assigning 130 instead of seventy years to Terah at the time of Abraham's birth. The net result of his labours was to enlarge the era of Petavius by twenty years, fixing the Deluge at 2348 B.C., the Exodus at 1491, and the foundation of the Temple at 1012 B.C. His system was adopted in the English Bible and generally among the divines of the Reformed Church.



out his translation of *Fower Bookes of the Histories of Cornelius Tacitus* with *The Life of Agricola,* forming a kind of continuation to Richard Grenewey's translation of *The Annals.* Between 1610 and 1613 Savile issued from his own private press at Eton in eight folio volumes, at a cost estimated at over £8,000 (equal to more like £50,000 in our money), a sumptuous edition of St. Chrysostom. As a publishing venture it was a failure, for a much cheaper Latin edition, containing much of Savile's material, was brought out by the Jesuits at Paris very shortly after its appearance. But it greatly exalted Savile's reputation in Europe as a munificent scholar, and this was further enhanced by his foundation of two professorships named after him at Oxford. He died at Eton on February 19th, 1622, being then seventy-three years of age.

The most interesting of the savants of the early Stuart time was John Selden (1584-1654), a man whose social position enabled him to employ his uncommon learning as an instrument of power, while a trenchant wit and irony lent a double-edge sharpness before which some of the most formidable persons of the day experienced unfamiliar tremors. Selden was perhaps the greatest of the powerful and numerous tribe of English antiquarian lawyers. He was a Whig constitutionalist before his time, and we have in him not a few premonitions of Temple, Halifax, Chesterfield, Burke, Blackstone, Fox, De Lolme, Disraeli, Bagehot, and other theorists upon constitutional questions of the first moment to statesmen at times of political tension or crisis.

Born at East Tarring, near Worthing, Selden was educated locally at Chichester, and at Oxford, but it was not until he got into the congenial atmosphere of the Inner Temple that his great powers began to develop. About 1605 he made the acquaintance of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton, the learned baronet, in whose library in Palace Yard



(transferred in 1753 to the British Museum), a veritable El Dorado to the literary student, he met Savile, D'Ewes, Spelman, Vincent, Ben Jonson, Sir Roger Twysden, and other erudite persons. The first fruits of his research were seen in some very crabbed productions upon the ancient law of Britain; in 1610 a small treatise on *Single Combat;* in 1614 a study upon *Titles of Honour;* an edition of Fortescue, a treatise on the *Jews in England,* a Discourse on the Office of Lord Chancellor, and finally in 1617 his famous *History of Tythes.* In this work, by the implied denial of the right of the clergy to such tithes *jure divino,* Selden showed what a formidable handle might be made of erudition and knowledge of precedent in approaching the burning questions of the hour. In the political controversy of the seventeenth century both parties claimed that law and precedent were on their side, while both alike were apt to be extremely vague in their references. By his wonderful power of manipulating ancient and precise records Selden acquired a political influence which it is doubtful if a pure savant has exercised before or since—at any rate, in England. Though James I. deprecated some of his deductions, he was very much interested in his details, and Selden was thenceforth a person of indisputable importance. Charles was highly pleased with his demonstrations of the exclusive rights of England in the narrow seas (*Mare Clausum,* 1636). Both Lords and Commons consulted him on questions of right and precedent. Amid the bitter controversies of his time Selden was naturally a trimmer both by conviction and scholarly predilection for peace. He was strongly opposed to Ship-money and to certain illegal acts of Charles and Buckingham, but he was no less hostile to the aggressions of the Commons in regard to the militia and the exclusion of bishops, while to the despotism of the King or Protector, bishop or presbyter, he was equally and impartially antagonistic. All



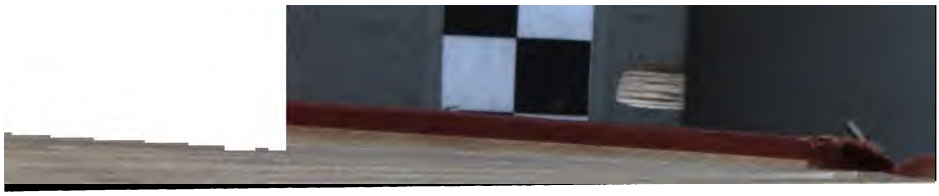
parties reciprocated his suspicion, but he was above all a thorn in the sides of the Westminster divines. A cardinal principle with him was the supremacy of the state. This dry light of detachment gives a special charm to his caustic sayings. As a writer he is apt to be prolix, discursive, and embarrassed by the weight of his own learning. As a talker we have Clarendon's word that he was a most clear discourser and "had the best faculty in making hard things easy and presenting them to the understanding of any man that hath been known." His most prized work, accordingly, for other than purposes of learned reference, is his *Table Talk,* put together by his secretary, Richard Milward, and published in 1689—thirty-five years after his death and "magnificent" funeral in the Temple Church.

Sir Henry Wotton attained to the coveted post of Provost of Eton College in 1624, and he thanked God that after a life of so much bustle he was able, like Charles V., to enjoy the quiet of the cloister. As Provost he conferred great benefits on the school and scholars, a number of his thoughtful and sympathetic letters to noblemen who put their sons or grandsons under his charge being still extant. At his hospitable table distinguished strangers met the most hopeful pupils of the college. But none surpassed Wotton himself either in wit or in rich store of reminiscence; for he had mixed intimately, not only with the great Elizabethans but also with most of the great foreigners of the age. It was he who forwarded a copy of Bacon's *Organum* to Kepler, and who furnished Milton with the necessary advices and introductions on his setting out for Italy. As a corrective to books and learned conversation, Wotton speaks of the delight with which, when the month of May came, he would go out with his angling-rod. He was also a great collector of Italian pictures and engravings. So many occupations left him but little leisure for

the *magnum opus* upon the history of England to which Charles I. summoned him. All that he left eventually were the fragmentary poems and essays, and the urbane familiar letters included after his death in the *Reliquæ Wottonianæ*.

A near neighbour of Wotton's at Eton, who frequented his parties and who resembled him both in great accomplishment and small achievement was the "ever-memorable" John Hales. Born at Bath in 1584, he was educated at Corpus Christi at Oxford, whence he became university Greek lecturer and a Fellow of Merton. He had a brief diplomatic experience as chaplain to Sir Dudley Carleton in Holland, and was present at the synod of Dort. On his return he seems sincerely to have shunned Church preferment, secluding himself among his books as a Fellow of Eton College, and dividing all his small surplus income between books and charity. Hales himself was notoriously a walking library, to whose resort the learned courtiers did seriously incline when the court was at Windsor. His great learning and profound judgment were combined with the most punctilious integrity and the utmost modesty in demeanour, so that there was no man of the day of whom more people spoke well. Of a firm though equable spirit, he became a fugitive during the Puritan revolution, but died eventually at Eton on May 19, 1656, being then seventy-two years of age. His *Works* were first collected and printed by the noted Glasgow printers Robert and Andrew Foulis, in three volumes, 1765.

The story of his defence of Shakespeare against a tirade of Ben Jonson, and of his undertaking to find something on any topic treated by the ancients at least as well treated by Shakespeare, is well known. He is one of the finest examples we have in England of modest and self-denying authorship. At the time of his death it was found that



he had sold his library and had parted by degrees with all his ready money in charity to deprived clergy and scholars.[1]

The tolerant and latitudinarian views of Hales were shared by no one more fully than his friend William Chillingworth, the son of a mayor of Oxford, who was educated at the Grammar School there, and became in 1628 a Fellow of Trinity College, being then twenty-six years of age. He came early under the influence of the Laudian theology, but was puzzled by the criticisms of Bellarmine, and became dissatisfied with the evidence for the continuity of

[1] His most notable, though still brief, contribution to eirenical literature was his tract on *Schism and Schismaticks*, probably written about 1636, though not published until 1642. Perhaps the earliest open plea for complete religious toleration, an idea absolutely revolting to Tudor thought, was the *Religious Peace, or A Plea for Liberty of Conscience*, of Leonard Busher, first printed in 1614 (see Masson's *Milton*, iii. 102). It has been suggested that James I. was influenced by this sincere and well-written advocation when he declared to Parliament in 1614, "No state can evidence that any religion or heresy was ever extirpated by the sword or by violence, nor have I ever judged it a way of planting the truth." Among the broad-minded Jacobean divines a high place belongs to Thomas Morton (d. 1659), an anti-Laudian bishop and great benefactor of learned men, such as Hooker, Walton, Basire, Barwick, and Durie (a warm advocate of Protestant union). Among the Laudians were John Buckeridge (d. 1631) and Richard Montague, both great preachers. Godfrey Goodman (d. 1656), Bishop of Gloucester, was too Romanising for Laud. He was the author of the delightfully circumstantial *Court of James I.*, first printed by Dr. Brewer in 1839. His advanced *Fall of Man* (admired by Milton and Southey) was answered by Bishop George Hakewill (d. 1649), a divine, Boswell tells us, who helped to form Dr. Johnson. Among the Puritan preachers of this time the most justly noted were Thomas Adams of Wingrave, "the prose Shakespeare of Puritan theologians"; Daniel Featley of Acton (d. 1645), author of *Ancilla Pietatis;* and Richard Sibbes (d. 1635), an emotional preacher who exhibited extraordinary power in his pulpit at Gray's Inn.



the Protestant Church. In 1630 he put himself under the tuition of the Jesuits at the College of Douay. But a course of Catholic theology effected a revolution in his views, and in 1634, having in the meantime returned to Oxford, he declared himself once more a Protestant. During the Civil War he adhered zealously to the Royal party, and in August, 1643, he fashioned an engine for the assault of the city of Gloucester. A few months later he was captured by the Parliamentarians, but was allowed to retire to the palace at Chichester, where he died on January 30th, 1644. He was buried in Chichester Cathedral, where his Puritan opponent, Dr. Cheynell, flung a copy of his "heretical" *Religion of Protestants* into the grave, that it might rot with its author and see corruption. His plea for toleration and his appeal to the individual reason were naturally disregarded during the heat of the conflict. But his ideas were revived with redoubled force after the Restoration, until after the Revolution of 1688 they became dominant under the influence of such men as Tillotson and Burnet.

Another of the most erudite Latinists and antiquarians of this abundant period was Francis Godwin, a Northamptonshire and Christ Church man, who owed his bishopric at Llandaff in 1601 expressly to his masterpiece of compilation and research, *A Catalogue of the Bishops of England since the First Planting of Christian Religion in this Island; together with the Brief History of their Lives and Memorable Actions* (1601, quarto). This was greatly improved in an edition of 1615, and translated into Latin in the following year as *De Præsulibus Angliæ;* Godwin, as a reward, was promoted to the more remunerative See of Hereford. Godwin also wrote annals, both ecclesiastical and civil, of the Tudor period. He died in April, 1633, leaving a great reputation for scholarship and a curious manuscript published in 1638 as "*The Man in*



the Moone; or A Discourse of a Voyage Thither, by Domingo Gonsales, the Speedy Messenger." This work, which reveals an imaginative interpretation of the Copernican system, was translated into French by the indefatigable Baudoin in 1648, and imitated by Cyrano de Bergerac in his famous *Voyage de la Lune.*[1] Hints were obviously derived from it by Dr. Wilkins, one of the institutors of the Royal Society, for his *Discovery of a New World in the* Moon, while directly and indirectly it evidently influenced both *Gulliver's Travels* and Paltock's *Adventures of Peter Wilkins.*

[1] Among other English authors who enjoyed the unusual honour of translation before 1650 were More, Foxe, Buchanan, James I., Bishop Hall (*Characterisms*, 1610), Bacon (*Essays*, 1612), Greene (*Pandosto*, 1619), Sidney (*Arcadia*, 1620), and Lord Herbert.



CHAPTER V

IZAAK WALTON: OCCASIONAL AND MINOR PROSE OF THE AGE OF MILTON

"Simon Peter said, 'I go a-fishing'; and they said, 'We also will go with thee.'"—JOHN xxi. 3.

James Howell—Harrington—Wilkins—Digby—Heylyn—Dugdale—Sir Thomas Herbert.

THE life of Izaak Walton from 1593 to 1683 almost bridges over a span of the Stuart dynasty. It affords a kind of talisman against the fanaticism which intervened between the Renaissance and the Restoration in England. Isaac, or, as he liked to write it—Izaak—Walton was born at Stafford on August 9th, 1593. Of his education and early years we know practically nothing, but according to Wood, he obtained a competency as a linen-draper in London. This seems hardly consistent with the fact that in his marriage of 1626 he was styled an ironmonger, while records show that he was made free of the Ironmongers' Company in November, 1618. In 1643 Walton was able to retire from trade on a modest competency, and in 1644 a vestryman was chosen for St. Dunstan's in room of "Isaac Walton, lately departed out of this parish." Wood says that Walton retired to Stafford, but if so he was back in London in time for Laud's execution early in 1645, and in 1650 he was at Clerkenwell preparing for press the *Reliquæ Wottonianæ,* to which he prefixed the brief yet charming life of Sir Henry Wotton which came out in 1651. In 1647 (after being seven years a widower) he had married again, Anne, daughter of Thomas, and half-sister of Bishop Ken.



Walton was sixty when in 1653 he published his immortal treatise, *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation,* being "a discourse of fish and fishing not unworthy the perusal of most anglers." The first edition (price eighteenpence) differs materially from the second, which appeared under Walton's superintendence in 1655.[1] The last edition is cast in the form of a dialogue between two persons—Piscator and Viator; while, in the second, three characters—Piscator, Venator, and Auceps (falconer)—sustain the discourse. Totnam Hill, however, is still the scene, and a May-day morning the time of the meeting. The idyllic mood in which Walton's favourite pastime is treated had been to a certain extent anticipated in Nicholas Breton's *Wits Trenchmour in a Conference had Betwixt a Scholler and an Angler,* published in 1597, and in John Dennys's unaffected and quaintly humorous poem on *The Secrets of Angling,* published three years after the author's death, in 1613. Yet in the perfection of finished art, discovered in a perfect simplicity, *The Compleat Angler* remains unique in our literature.

In 1665 Walton gave to the world his Life of Richard Hooker, which he dedicated to George Morley, Bishop of Winchester, at whose palace at Farnham he found an asylum for his old age after the death of his wife in 1662, Five years later appeared his Life of George Herbert, and in the same year, 1670, the four Lives of Donne (the favourite of Dr. Johnson), Wotton, Hooker, and Herbert were collected in a single volume dedicated to Morley.

[1] The last edition published in Walton's time was the famous fifth edition of 1678, in which Charles Cotton's "Instructions how to Angle for a Trout or Grayling in a Clear Stream" appear for the first time. The standard editions of *The Compleat Angler* are those of Sir Harris Nicholas (1836) and R. B. Marston (1888); to which may be added for reference the introductions by Lang, Lowell, and John Buchan (Little Library).



To this unrivalled collection of devotional biographies, unapproached alike in grateful simplicity and in humble admiration and piety, the Life of Robert Sanderson was added in 1678. Walton must have been well over eighty when he wrote it—truly the ripe fruit of a noble stem. Walton died at his married daughter's house in Winchester on December 15th, 1683, and was buried in the south transept of Winchester Cathedral.

Walton's career, says Mr. Andrew Lang, is seen to be that of "a man born in a humble position, but attracting by his charm of character and happy religion the friendship of learned divines and prelates. More than most authors, he lives in his writings, which are the pure expression of a kind, humorous, and pious soul in love with nature; while the expression itself is unique for apparent simplicity which is really elaborately studied art." His descriptions of flowers, fields, and streams are the prose of the poetry in Shakespeare's incidental rustic songs, or Marlowe's *Come Live with Me*. His love of music is continually evident in the pages of his *Angler*. His unaffected love of God and man won for him, after his death, the admiration of Dr. Johnson, who must also have been drawn to him as a Royalist and Churchman, of Wordsworth, of Lamb, and of Landor. The pastoral revives in his idyllic pages, and he has given the gentle sport a halo of fine literature which it has never quite lost. Culture and sport, poetry and prose, nature and art are reconciled most rarely in the choice simplicity and haunting cadences of the fondly remembered "Iz: Wa."

James Howell, the son of a Carmarthenshire rector, was born at Abernant about 1595, and was educated at Hereford Free School, and Jesus College, Oxford. After taking his degree he became the foreign agent of a glassware manufactory in Broad Street, London, and was sent to Venice to pick up competent workmen and the latest



designs. After six years of this work he became an accomplished linguist, and was employed on one or two semi-diplomatic missions (Madrid-Copenhagen). In 1640 he published a political allegory in prose called *Dodona's Grove, or The Vocal Forest.* His services and talents already gave him a strong claim upon the Royalist party, when in 1643 his papers were seized by order of the Long Parliament, and he was committed (for eight long years) to the Fleet Prison. There he wrote a large number of political pamphlets, an ill-natured description of the people and country of Scotland, and a survey of the Seignorie of Venice, published in the year of his release from the Fleet, 1651. Six years later he gave to the world *Londonopolis,* a gossipy perlustration of the city, largely borrowed from Stow, with interesting plates by Hollar. In 1661 he was appointed Historiographer Royal of England, with a salary of £100 a year. He died unmarried in Holborn, and was buried on November 3rd, 1666, in the Temple Church, where in the triforium gallery his costly monument may still be seen. It is an exaggeration to say that Howell was one of the first Englishmen to make a livelihood by his pen, yet few professional writers have worked harder than he did during his sojourn of eight years in the Fleet Prison. He owes his place in English literature exclusively to the *Epistolæ Ho-Elianæ:* familiar letters, domestic and foreign, divided into sundry sections, autobiographical, historical, political, and philosophical.[1]

[1] 1645—1655: there is nothing very extraordinary about the letters. Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Tobie Mathew, and other gossips of James I.'s court had developed the Familiar Letter in imitation of Cicero, Pliny, and Seneca; but the *Epist. Ho-Elianæ* are more of an *olla podrida*, and come nearer to the divine *chit-chat* of Walpole and Cowper. His light touch in stringing together oddities and the fealty and flattery of Southey, Lamb, Disraeli, and, above all, Thackeray, ensure a long life to Howell.

The eighteenth-century essayists from Steele and Defoe onwards borrowed much of Howell's manner and method and not a few of his stories. It is pleasant to be able to go so far back for one's travel talk and anecdotage and to find the tap running so clear. Howell himself says that "running waters are purest," which being interpreted may be taken to mean that Howell writing in the manner of a diarist of travel mercifully avoids all stylistic preciosity. The result is a literary salad which has been the delight of the omnivorous reader, and is still verdant for the true book-lover, who for stray reading prefers an old book to a new one.

A writer who has some affinity to Howell, though ostensibly at least a political theorist, and is in fact somewhat difficult to classify, is James Harrington, who must be carefully distinguished from his remote kinsman Sir John Harrington (or Harington), the godson of Queen Elizabeth, the author of a version of *Ariosto* and of *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*.

James Harrington, the political theorist, eldest son of Sir Sapcotes Harrington, of Rand, Lincolnshire, rambled from Oxford to Rome, where he refused to kiss the Pope's toe, adroitly excusing himself at a later date to Charles I. for what Sir Leslie Stephen agreeably calls his "rudeness" by saying that he would not kiss the foot of any prince after kissing the hand of King Charles. He visited Venice, and like most of the thinkers of that time was much impressed by the Venetian constitution and system of government. In 1647 Harrington and his friend Herbert were made grooms of the King's bedchamber at Holmby House.[1]

[1] Another literary attendant of Charles during the last saddened hours was Sir Thomas Herbert, a kinsman of the third Earl of Pembroke, who published, in 1634, a once famous volume of *Travaile into Afrique and Greater Asia* (he had been in the Persian suite of Sir Dodmore Cotton). A fourth



The King loved his company, says Aubrey, only he could not bear to hear of a commonwealth; and Mr. Harrington passionately loved his Majesty. Often they disputed about government. Harrington was on the scaffold in January, 1649, and the King gave him a watch. After the King's death he began a scheme for a new form of government; this he embodied in a large book upon an ideal commonwealth, to which he gave the name *Oceana*. He was kept in confinement for two years or so upon the Restoration, and suffered much, Aubrey tells us, at the hands of Beelzebub and other evil spirits, dying finally at Westminister on September 11th, 1677, aged sixty-six.

Harrington's general scheme as expounded in *Oceana* comprised a popular assembly and a senate of members with the land qualification elected by the people in their precincts by secret ballot. The senate was to debate and propose laws, the assemblies to accept or refuse them only. The executive was drawn annually from the senate by a process of rotation. There was further to be limitation in the ownership of land, upon which Harrington held that all political power depended. He believed, too, in "a natural aristocracy," in free compulsory education, in an independent judicature, in liberty of conscience for all Protestants, and in the abolition of primogeniture. Many

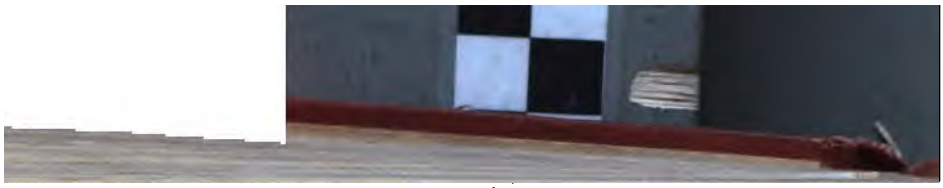
edition of this appeared in 1677. A Parliamentarian in politics, Herbert was appointed to attend the King at Holmby House. The King became attached to him, and on the fatal 30th of January gave him a watch and his folio Shakespeare (1632). In 1678 Herbert printed a touching, minute, and ceremonious detail of the last two years of the King's life (*Threnodia Carolina*, 1678, reprinted several times as *Memoirs of the Last Two Years*, to which was added *A Particular Account of the Funeral of the King in a Letter to Sir Wm. Dugdale*). He was made a baronet in 1660, worked at antiquities for Dugdale, and died at York in 1682. An interesting sketch of Harrington's doctrinaire theories will be found in Scott's *Woodstock*.



of his ideas are undoubtedly good and well expressed, but they are overwhelmed by the multiplicity of detail, a glaring example being his explanation of the proper method of balloting drawn mainly from Venice. Many of his expressions, such as that in which he demands a government of laws, not of men, or says that the exercise of just authority over a free people ought to arise from their own consent, have found their way into American constitutions.

The lighter vein of prose during what we may call the periodic period is well illustrated by Peter Heylyn, a native of Burford in Oxfordshire, a clever young Demy of Magdalen, who took up historical geography and published a book on the subject in 1621. James I. is said to have taken offence at a phrase in this book to the effect that France was a greater and more famous kingdom than England. In order to show that his heart was in the right place, Heylyn in 1625 made a journey through France and wrote an amusing satirical journal published many years later as a survey of France. This work and the geography, which he subsequently enlarged into a cosmography, contained the most entertaining part of Heylyn's work as a stylist.

Heylyn's *Survey* remained a popular book in the eighteenth century, and many of his observations reappear in the works of Goldsmith, Smollett, and Sterne. But Heylyn was much better known in his own day as a keen controversialist, as the assailant of the Puritan Sabbath in his *History of the Sabbath,* written by royal command in 1636, of Bishop Williams and other opponents of Laud, and of the "falsities" in Fuller's *Church History.* But Heylyn's controversial acrimony was the mask of a kindly disposition, and his complete reconciliation with Fuller is a delightful episode in Heylyn's restless and somewhat irritable career as a critic. In 1642 he lost all his possessions, and became a fugitive in the land; yet when quieter times surpervened



in 1653 his parishioners in Alresford in Hampshire showed their affection for him by restoring the chief articles of his furniture which they had bought for that purpose. From an academic point of view his most important works were those written towards the end of his career, in justification of Laud's attempt to restore ecclesiastical order, notably *Ecclesia Vindicata* and *Ecclesia Restaurata,* or *The History of the Reformation.* At the Restoration he was restored to his prebend as sub-dean of Westminster, and he would probably have been made a bishop; but he was already so wasted by ague that he looked like a skeleton, and he died at Westminster on May 8th, 1662.[1]

[1] Another exponent of this more active and concise English prose was Dr. John Wilkins, whose best known work, published in 1638 when he was only twenty-four years of age, was entitled *The Discovery of a New World; or, A Discourse Tending to Prove that it is Probable there may be Another World in the Moon, with a Discourse Concerning the Possibility of a Passage Thither.* In this treatise the learned doctor gravely discourses the practicability of a journey to the moon, and shows much ingenuity and humour in disposing of the serious difficulties in the way of such an attempt. Another treatise entitled *A Discourse Concerning a New Planet,* which appeared two years later, is interesting from its connection with a somewhat similar book, already described, of Bishop Godwin, and as being one of the earliest attempts of an English philosopher to uphold the validity of the Copernican system.

A more singular representative of the nebulous scientific theories of the period was Sir Kenelm Digby, a sucking philosopher whom the sober John Evelyn does not hesitate to call "an arrant mountebank," "the very Pliny of our Age for lying." The son of Sir Everard Digby, of Gayhurst, he strayed from Oxford to Florence, and thence to Madrid, returning from Spain with Prince Charles in 1623. His romantic courtship of Venetia Stanley, the history of which is recorded in his private memoirs, mostly written upon the Isle of Melos in 1628, at the close of a successful privateering expedition in the Mediterranean, the various confidential missions in which he was engaged, first on behalf of Queen Henrietta Maria,